WHO CARES WHO'S TREASURY SECRETARY? The Editors

THE NEW REPUBLIC

WHAT TRENT LOTT BELIEVES
Michelle Cottle

WHAT MILAN KUNDERA FORGETS
James Wood

DECEMBER 23, 2002

AT HOME ABROAD

Do the Iraqi Exiles Understand Iraq?

Jason Zengerle

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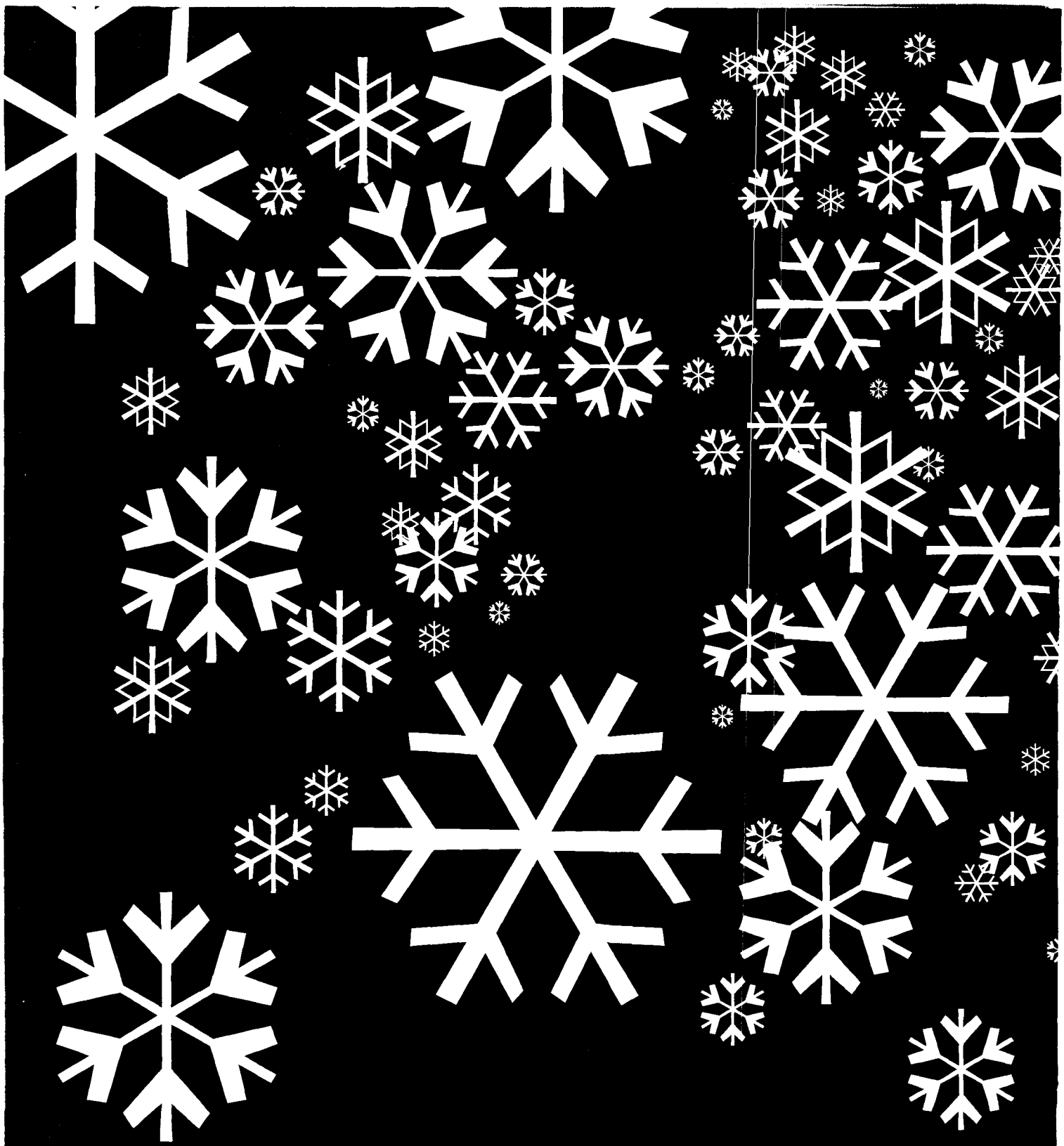

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First aid

TO THE EDITORS:

Many of the concerns raised in THE NEW REPUBLIC's editorial also appeared in a report issued by the Council on Foreign Relations' homeland security task force ("Be Prepared," November 11). The report, titled "America Still Unprepared—America Still in Danger," noted that the United States remains dangerously unprepared to prevent the next terrorist attack on its soil. The report noted that first responders "are not prepared for a chemical or biological attack. Their radios cannot communicate with one another, and they lack the training and protective gear to protect themselves and the public in an emergency."

I believe that the potential for another terrorist attack on our soil is real, and I also believe that Congress has done far too little to help our local communities prepare. On September 24, I introduced the Homeland Emergency Responders Organization Act. This act would solve two of the significant homeland security concerns noted in the TNR editorial and in the task force's report.

First, the act directs the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to create an Office of National Preparedness and to distribute grants directly to local communities based on population density and proximity to international borders and nuclear and chemical plants. These federal dollars would enable local communities to utilize federal grant dollars for their highest priorities—purchasing communications equipment, upgrading emergency operating centers, or training. Annual grants would also be provided to states (regardless of size or population) to establish inter- and intrastate terrorism-response exercises. Second, FEMA would be responsible for establishing standards for communications equipment and first-responder training.

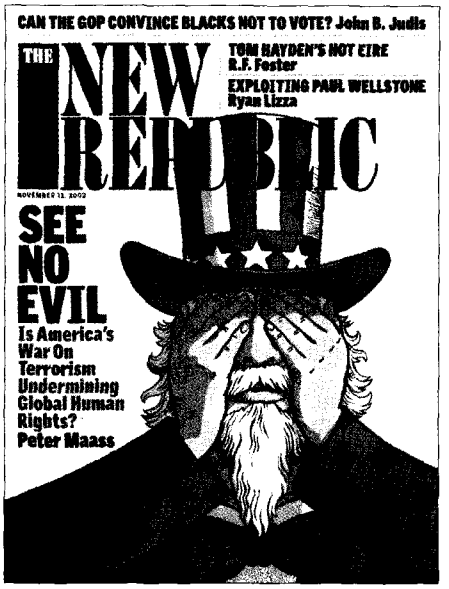
Hopefully, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will heed the dire warnings from the director of the CIA and other terrorism experts and give this serious issue the attention it merits.

ALCEE L. HASTINGS
U.S. Representative
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Race card

TO THE EDITORS:

John B. Judis accuses Republicans of trying to "suppress the minority vote" because (1) they are trying to appeal to


CAN THE GOP CONVINCE BLACKS NOT TO VOTE? John B. Judis
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Peter Maass

black voters—or at least dampen the Democrats' appeal—by emphasizing the faults of Democrats and playing down their own relative conservatism; and (2) they oppose voter fraud, which disproportionately aids Democrats ("Soft Sell," November 11). Those two activities are wholly unremarkable and legitimate. In no way do they justify Judis's hysterical accusations, which are sleazier racial politics than anything the Republicans are doing.

ROGER CLEGG
General Counsel
Center for Equal Opportunity
Sterling, Virginia

Future expense

TO THE EDITORS:

Jonathan Chait makes a number of charges in his recent piece on Social Security that warrant a response ("Private Club," November 4). Chait claims that the proposals of President Bush's Commission to Strengthen Social Security "assum[e] that more than $2 trillion will be transferred into the program from other revenues," saying such assumptions are "disingenuous" during a time of budget deficits. Chait's figures are wrong, for no such assumption appears in the commission's report. The actual determination by the Social Security Administration's chief actuary was that the commission's solvent proposals would require, respectively, 46 and 36 percent *less* than the cost of restoring long-range solvency to an unreformed Social Security system. What is truly "disingenuous" is Chait's opposing personal accounts with the argument of scarce budgetary resources when we all know that the existing system would be more expensive to sustain.

This was recently demonstrated when Representatives Jim Kolbe and Charlie Stenholm made a bipartisan request for an analysis by the Social Security Administration regarding the amount of benefits that the existing system could pay for the same money required for the commission proposals. As my fellow commission member Bill Frenzel described the findings in a recent statement, "In order to offer benefits as high as in the commission's personal account framework, the current Social Security system would require greater amounts of revenue."

Finally, as a loyal Democrat, I must dissent from Chait's view that "petty caviling on Social Security is exactly what the country needs from the Democratic Party right now." That is the worst possible advice for the country. Only if we fairly compare the alternatives can the public make an informed and objective choice about the future of Social Security. Democrats and Republicans on the president's commission worked together in a bipartisan way to produce the best possible plans. If others truly believe there is a better way, they should tell the millions of Americans who care deeply about Social Security just what it is.

ROBERT L. JOHNSON
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
Black Entertainment Television
Member, President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security

JONATHAN CHAIT REPLIES:

I'm flabbergasted that Robert L. Johnson would deny that the commission relies upon more than $2 trillion in revenue transfers. Everyone who follows the issue knows this to be true. A report by the Social Security Administration's actuaries, for instance, states that "[a]ssuming 2/3 participation in the individual account option in each case, the aggregate net cash-flow requirement from general revenue would be $4.8 trillion, $2.3 trillion, and $2.9 trillion for Models 1, 2, and 3, respectively." Johnson proceeds to argue that the commission would require less general revenue than the status quo. But so what? The commission also has large benefit cuts. If you implement those benefit cuts *without* private accounts, you don't need a magic $2 trillion to make the program solvent. ■

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

No Vice

FOR THE GREATER good of the Democratic Party, Joe Lieberman should run against Al Gore for president. Right now, unfortunately, Joe Lieberman and Al Gore are conspiring to make that impossible.

As everyone in Washington knows, Lieberman has pledged not to run for the 2004 nomination if Gore does. Gore says he won't decide until consulting with his family over the holidays. But, on ABC's "This Week" last Sunday, Gore announced that next year he will "put out specific details of an economic plan" and unveil a "far more detailed presentation" on health care. Doesn't sound like a guy whose career plans are much in doubt.

The press has speculated that Gore could "release" Lieberman from his pledge. And, in a narrow sense, Gore has done just that. "Whatever he wants to do is up to him," Gore told Barbara Walters. To *The Hartford Courant*'s David Lightman, he said Lieberman's promise wasn't "a pledge to me. It's simply a statement he [Lieberman] made to his constituents and the American people."

But, while these statements technically free Lieberman to run, they don't give him the cover he needs. If Lieberman runs against Gore after pledging not to, the press will savage him. Gore—as the aggrieved party—is the only person who can call off the hounds. And, politically, that is exactly what Gore hasn't done. By noting that Lieberman made the pledge "to his constituents and the American people," Gore is essentially saying that if Lieberman wants to betray the public, he should go right ahead.

But you can't help someone who won't help himself. And, while Gore hasn't gone as far in releasing Lieberman as he might, Lieberman hasn't shown much interest in being released. Asked on CNN whether Gore's comments to Walters meant he was free to run, Lieberman said, "I appreciated what he said ... but nothing's changed." In an interview with *The New Haven Register*, he insisted, "The only person who could release me from the pledge is me, and I'm not going to do it."

So Gore and Lieberman seem resigned to the outcome. Gore (assuming he runs) gets one fewer competitor for the nomination; Lieberman keeps his reputation for integrity intact. The big loser is the Democratic Party. That's because what the party desperately needs in the 2004 primaries is a credible, unapologetic hawk willing to challenge the party's drift toward Pelosi-ism. And, right now, Joe Lieberman is the only person auditioning for the job.

Without Lieberman, the Democratic field will be divided into two groups: candidates without strong foreign policy credentials, and candidates with strong foreign policy credentials who are generally hostile to the Bush administration's war with Iraq. The first group will feature John Edwards and Richard Gephardt. Edwards came out strongly for the war, but, given his lack of foreign policy experience, it's hard to imagine him making national security the centerpiece of his campaign. For his part, Gephardt surprised many in Washington by pushing a tough war resolution through the House. But the reason so many people were surprised is that Gephardt—who opposed the Gulf war—had no preexisting reputation as a hawk. The ex-minority leader's support for war may be entirely sincere, but his reputation for insincerity makes him the worst possible person to carry the pro-war banner in 2004. The party base already suspects that congressional Democrats backed the war for cynical political reasons. And, given Gephardt's history of politically motivated flip-flops, his emergence as the pro-war candidate would confirm exactly that.

Facing them would be two candidates with higher foreign policy profiles: John Kerry and Al Gore. Kerry, as I noted last week, has boosted his stature in recent months by talking constantly about foreign policy. But, when it comes to Iraq, Kerry—although he voted yes in the Senate—spends far more time criticizing the Bush administration's unilateralism than arguing for regime change in Baghdad. Last week, on NBC's "Meet the Press," he wouldn't even disavow his vote against the first Gulf war—not an encouraging sign for Democrats hoping he'll run as a hawk in dovish Iowa and New Hampshire.

Gore, of course, did back the Gulf war. But, in recent months, he has adopted a more staunchly antiwar position than any of his likely Democratic rivals. While Kerry has attacked the Bush administration's unilateralism on Iraq, Gore's main critique is more fundamental: that the looming showdown with Saddam Hussein distracts attention from the war on terrorism. And, logically, that critique commits Gore to oppose both unilateral *and* multilateral war with Iraq. As Gore told *The New York Times* last month, "I think our chances of success [in the war on terrorism] ... have been drastically damaged by the president's decision in the run-up to the election to shift all the focus to an entirely different new war." It's hard not to read that statement as an opposition to *any* war with Iraq while Al Qaeda remains at large.

Lieberman, then, is the most credible hawk on the Democratic horizon. He voted for the Gulf war and criticized the first Bush administration for not going to Baghdad. In the late '90s, he co-sponsored legislation to provide military training to the Iraqi opposition. And he says forthrightly that, while he would prefer the United States to attack Iraq under U.N. auspices, he supports military action either way.

Perhaps most important of all, Lieberman—uniquely among prominent Democrats—argues that war with Iraq is desirable not *despite* the message it would send to the Muslim world but *because* of it. On the Senate floor in September, he called overthrowing Saddam "an opportunity to show the world's moderate, law-abiding Muslim majority ... that as we oppose tyranny and terror, we will actively support them in their fight for freedom and a better life." That statement is basically the opposite of Gore's insistence on "This Week" that the looming war with Iraq is fueling Islamic radicalism in Pakistan and coming at a "cost in the international community." In Gore and Lieberman's comments, you can glimpse the national security debate the Democrats need to have—not just about Iraq but, more broadly, about fighting terrorism by preserving stability in the Muslim world, as Gore suggests, or fighting terrorism by trying to remake the Muslim world, as Lieberman does.

If he runs, Lieberman will probably lose that debate and the nomination. But he will lay the foundation for a hawkish insurgency within the Democratic Party. Such a campaign might be modeled on an earlier presidential insurgency, in 1988, when a Democratic senator challenged the national security weakness that was consigning his party to oblivion. The insurgent was pilloried by the liberal base and lost the nomination. But, four years later, he was in the White House, and the Democrats were a different party. His name was Al Gore.

PETER BEINART

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Snow Job

IS PRESIDENT BUSH finally doing right by the economy? When word came last Friday that the White House had decided to fire Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, the news seemed to lend itself to two interpretations—one favorable, the other not.

The first was that O'Neill had been fired because he was a chronic bumbler: He made naive predictions about the stock market, which undermined his credibility when they didn't come true; he made derogatory comments about foreign currencies, which had a nasty habit of becoming self-fulfilling; he once even talked down the U.S. dollar; and his no-skin-off-my-back response to news of the recent corporate scandals made jittery capital markets even more jittery. These would all have been good reasons to fire the Treasury secretary, particularly as the economy continued to stagnate.

The second interpretation was that O'Neill wasn't fanatical enough in his devotion to tax cuts: He occasionally questioned the soundness of the Bush tax cut last year; he once quite reasonably derided a Republican stimulus plan as "show business" after it passed the House larded with corporate goodies; and, in the administration's most recent internal deliberations over economic stimulus, he reportedly raised concerns about the effect of additional tax cuts on the deficit. Needless to say, O'Neill's relative sanity on these matters would have been exactly the wrong reason to fire him.

So it was with some initial satisfaction that we greeted Monday's announcement that the president had chosen railroad executive John Snow as his next Treasury secretary. Snow is, if anything, to his predecessor's left ideologically: He is an avowed deficit hawk and has advocated tough corporate-accountability measures. Style-wise, however, Snow represents a radical departure. Over the last several days, news accounts have repeatedly depicted Snow as tactful and smooth—not adjectives you'd associate with O'Neill. By appointing Snow, in other words, the president seemed to get rid of what was bad about O'Neill while keeping what was good.

But, the closer you look at Snow's appointment, the less comforting it really is. That's because—as just about every news report surrounding his appointment has made clear—Snow isn't expected to make economic policy; he's only expected to *sell* economic policy. As *The Wall Street Journal* put it this week, "Rather than looking for decision makers or strategists, the White House is seeking salesmen for its tax cuts, prescription-drug insurance program for the elderly and reshaping of Medicare."

Which is to say, the reason Snow was hired despite having thoughts on economic policy that directly conflict with the administration's isn't that the White House values ideological diversity or that it's prepared to admit its policies have been a failure. It's that Snow's thoughts on economic policy are substantially irrelevant. In the White House's view, making economic policy—and, if you believe former Bush adviser John DiIulio, domestic policy in general—isn't a job for policy officials like the Treasury secretary; it's a job for political strategists like Karl Rove and Deputy Chief of Staff Josh Bolten. How else to explain the fact that the administration announced Snow's appointment *after* it had more or less finalized its stimulus plan? The package (surprise!) consists largely of accelerating the upper-income portions of last year's tax cut, while ignoring the long-term impact on the deficit—which, even without the estimated $300 billion price tag of the stimulus proposal, is expected to rise to nearly $900 billion by 2012—and giving a cold shoulder to low-income earners, the people most likely to spend their tax savings.

In fact, once you consider the blatantly irresponsible contours of the White House stimulus plan, you realize why it was important for the administration to appoint a credentialed moderate like Snow to push the plan on Wall Street and Capitol Hill. After all, installing a political lightning rod such as Phil Gramm or Steve Forbes at Treasury wouldn't have made the "growth" plan appreciably friendlier to the rich. (Short of repealing the estate tax immediately, it's tough to imagine how that even would have been possible.) It would simply have made the radical nature of the plan more obvious and therefore harder for mainstream Democrats and Republicans to swallow. Hiding radical policies behind a veneer of moderation, on the other hand, is a strategy that Rove et al have used to great effect over the last three years. (Remember the endless front-page stories about the diversity of Bush's Cabinet?) Unless the press wises up, it will work again this time. ■

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NOTEBOOK

SNOWED: Several commentators, the editors of this magazine included, have pointed out that incoming Treasury Secretary John Snow is a less-than-perfect ideological fit for this administration given his past support for deficit reduction and aggressive corporate reform. But a quick look at Snow's record as chief executive of the rail company CSX suggests he may be right at home with the administration's economic policies after all. For starters, there was CSX's phenomenal stinginess when it came to paying taxes during Snow's tenure. According to Citizens for Tax Justice, the company avoided paying taxes altogether in three of the last four years, despite profits of nearly $1 billion over that period. Indeed, Snow—who, among other duties, will soon oversee the Internal Revenue Service—was so effective at gaming the tax system that he even managed to win his company $164 million in tax rebates during that time. Then there's the remarkable similarity between Snow's approach to stock valuations and that of the administration: Under Snow's leadership over the last decade, the price of CSX stock has dropped 17 percent (this at a time when the S&P 500 has increased 111 percent); meanwhile, the Dow Jones has lost 20 percent of its value since Inauguration Day 2001. And finally, there's Snow's personal willingness—opposition in principle notwithstanding—to run up debt. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, CSX's debt load has increased from just under $6 billion to nearly $7 billion since late 2000, its highest level in seven years. Sound familiar?

RACE TO THE BOTTOM: So Trent Lott has now apologized (however unconvincingly) for his repulsive suggestion that the nation would have been better off if then-segregationist Strom Thurmond had won the presidency in 1948 (see "Separate Ways," page 14). But Lott is not the only person who might want to rethink his words on this subject. Take Kevin Martin, government and political affairs director of the African American Republican Leadership Council. Describing Lott's remarks as "lighthearted" and "humorous," Martin told the Associated Press that there was no way the past and future Senate majority leader could be racist. His evidence? Lott, he says, receives 25 percent of the black vote in Mississippi. Actually, no. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Lott won a pathetic *5 percent* of the black vote in his 2000 Senate race. This despite the fact that Lott's opponent, Troy Brown—no, not the wide receiver for the New England Patriots but rather a former administrator at Mississippi Valley State University who had never held elective office—was outspent by a staggering 100 to one. (Lott spent $4,348,828; Brown spent $40,349.) Lott won the race not by appealing to black voters in Mississippi but by taking 92 percent of the white vote. Now, it would be unfair to argue that the massive racial gap in support for Lott (87 points!) proves he is a racist. But it's just plain stupid to argue, as Martin does, that it proves he's not.

OOPS!: "Because of an editing error, an article yesterday about heightened alarms over terrorism in Europe misstated the location of a bombing in Tunisia last spring that killed 21 people, including 14 German tourists. It was at a synagogue, not a mosque."—correction in *The New York Times*, December 9

POOR LOSER WATCH: Remember those long ago days two years ago when Republicans across the country were united in insisting that Democrats *just get over it*? Sure, Al Gore won hundreds of thousands more votes than George W. Bush nationally. And sure, poor ballot design led thousands of Democratic voters in Florida to mistakenly vote for Pat Buchanan. And sure, a statewide hand recount—had the Supreme Court's conservative majority allowed it to take place—might have given the state, and the presidency, to Gore. But c'mon. What was done was done. Democrats should just deal with it and take another shot in four years. As *National Review* editor-at-large William F. Buckley wrote, "Any attempt to dismiss the election of George W. Bush as fraudulent invites the wrong kind of skepticism. . . . The right kind of skepticism should rest with the acceptance of electoral results in well-intended democratic exercises as conclusive; until, as Mr. Lincoln put it, successful appeals are brought by succeeding elections." Well, it seems that losing a close race can bring out the skeptic in anyone. The cover of the current issue of *National Review* is emblazoned, "SOUTH DAKOTA'S INVALID SENATOR: HOW THE DEMOCRATS STOLE A SENATE SEAT." It refers, of course, to Democratic incumbent Senator Tim Johnson, who beat challenger John Thune by a mere 524 votes. The cover story consists of a grab bag of complaints based on "more than 40 affidavits" gathered by Republicans in the state. Some of these complaints are simply silly: that Democratic lawyers forced polling places in one county to stay open until 7 p.m. Mountain time (as required by state law) even though most residents operated on Central time; that one Republican ballot examiner "didn't know" all the rules governing her task and her Democratic counterpart did. ("I believe the race would have been much closer had we paid more attention," she explained.) Other charges are more serious but based on flimsy evidence: three affidavits from voters who claim they were offered $10 to go the polls; ballots that a GOP poll watcher felt "didn't look right." And it bears repeating that such evidence was collected not by law enforcement or even nonpartisan watchdogs but by self-identified partisans. As state Attorney General Mark Barnett (a Republican who had himself raised the possibility of voter fraud prior to the election) told the *Rapid City Journal*, "[M]any of the things set out in those affidavits are not crimes. They are what I would call local election-board management problems." (Barnett is investigating the three affidavits suggesting voters might have been paid, but he assures that nothing he finds will change the election outcome.) But wait, there's more: In

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addition to its cover story, *National Review* has put another article on the South Dakota race on its website. Titled "'BUYER'S REMORSE' IN SOUTH DAKOTA," the piece reports the findings of a poll commissioned by (surprise!) "Republicans in South Dakota" purporting to show that GOP voters who crossed over to vote for Tim Johnson now regret having done so. Sadly, what it shows is pretty close to the opposite. The poll asked Johnson voters, "If you had known that because of what happened in other states that the Democrats would lose control of the Senate, and Tom Daschle would no longer be majority leader, would you have still voted for Tim Johnson, or would you have voted for John Thune?" Fully 95 percent said they would still have voted for Johnson and only 5 percent said they wished they had voted for Thune. Now, we have neither the money, the time, nor the inclination to run around conducting polls to find out how often voters, based on subsequent events, wish they'd voted another way. But, given the leading nature of the question and the large number of crossover votes in South Dakota, 5 percent seems to us a rather tiny number of people expressing second thoughts. We suspect, for instance, that a great many more registered Democrats in Palm Beach, Florida, "regret" their presidential votes for Buchanan in 2000. As for ourselves, we'd be content with a poll of *National Review* subscribers that determines how many are happy with their subscriptions and how many, in light of the magazine's ludicrous South Dakota fixation, are suffering from "buyer's remorse."

IT FLOATS, IT SINKS: "BUSH CAN DO *MUCH* BETTER THAN STEPHEN FRIEDMAN"—headline of an article, written by Club for Growth President Stephen Moore, challenging the front-runner to head the president's National Economic Council, *National Review Online*, December 11

"Stephen Friedman's nomination to become the chief economic adviser to the White House is in big trouble. ... [T]he new economic adviser could be Stephen Moore, the former fiscal policy director for the right-wing Cato Institute."—*New York Post*, same day

"White House officials lashed out at critics of Mr. Friedman, including Stephen Moore, president of the Club for Growth, a conservative political action committee. They said Mr. Moore had no credibility with the administration."—*The New York Times*, same day

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: In "Ill Treatment" (December 2 & 9), the waiting period for an electrocardiogram in Los Angeles County was incorrectly reported as twelve days. Twelve days is the waiting period for an *echo*cardiogram. We apologize for the error. ■

INSIDE THE BOX | Bruce Reed

RISING UNEMPLOYMENT

White House dumps economic team. O'Neill, Lindsey, Pitt—the Bush economic plan is costing more jobs than it's creating.

TRAIN MAN

Bush puts another multimillionaire exec in his Cabinet. Snow sees no conflict of interest between CSX and Treasury: "We haven't paid federal taxes for years!"

KISS...

Iraq tells Kuwait it's really sorry for that 1990 invasion. Saddam's excuse: "When I was young and megalomaniacal, I was young and megalomaniacal."

...AND MAKE UP

Iraq sends U.N. 12,000-page declaration that it has no weapons of mass destruction. Early reviews: Saddam's best work of fiction yet!

CASH FOR HACKS

Bush resumes cash bonuses for political appointees. Coming in 2004: Pay cuts for doing the right thing.

BON TEMPS

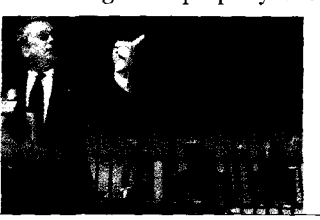
Landrieu holds off Bush, holds onto Louisiana Senate seat. Impact: Instead of Man of the Year, Rove may have to settle for Employee of the Month.

FLEET STREET

U.N. team makes surprise search of royal palace. If weapons thing doesn't work out, they can always go to work for British tabloids.

IF YOU CAN MAKE IT HERE

Bloomberg raises property taxes 18%, denies middle class will have nowhere to go: "That's why we have the Hamptons!"



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On the Hill

Sugar Pill

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

ON TUESDAY MORNING, December 3, Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana appeared done for. With her poll numbers diving a few days before the December 7 runoff that would determine her political future—advisers say her support among white voters had dipped below 30 percent—Landrieu seemed like a wobbly pin about to topple and thus complete the strike Republicans had bowled in the 2002 elections. The national media had all but written her off, and President George W. Bush was flying in to give her Republican opponent, Suzie Terrell, the star treatment that had worked for so many GOP candidates in November. "We felt that we needed something big to happen," says Landrieu media consultant David Eichenbaum.

And then lightning struck. On Tuesday, the Landrieu campaign got a call from a tipster directing them to an obscure Mexican newspaper called *Reforma* that had an interesting story about ... sugar. It hardly seemed the stuff of high campaign drama, but Landrieu had been trying for weeks to flog rumors that the Bush administration would increase sugar imports from Mexico, which would be a sure blow to Louisiana's $1.7 billion sugar industry. The White House had denied the talk, and the story hadn't gained much traction.

A Democratic Party researcher in Washington quickly tracked down the *Reforma* story on the Web. Quoting Mexican government officials, it reported a Bush administration agreement to double Mexican sugar-import quotas. Sensing an opportunity, Landrieu's advisers held a 90-minute conference call that night, after which Eichenbaum retreated to his production studio. He emerged after 8 a.m. with an ad that breathlessly exposed the "secret deal" with Mexico and fumed that Terrell "didn't say a word" about sugar to Bush during his visit. "Suzie Terrell put her party and campaign ahead of our state," it declared. "We need a senator who will put Louisiana *first*."

The ad began to run Wednesday night, and suddenly Landrieu's prospects turned, well, sweeter. Landrieu, whom Terrell had savaged for months—charging that she had abandoned her Catholicism and lived in a Washington "mansion"—had already hit back hard, running ads that called Terrell a "paid lobbyist for a foreign drug company"—a line *The New York Times* interpreted as a sinister reference to Terrell's Lebanese heritage. The emergence of a "secret deal" with Mexico fit nicely with the theme of Terrell's foreign ties. Groups of Landrieu backers "with 10-foot stalks of weather beaten sugar cane in their hands and wide-brimmed sombreros on their heads," as a *Congressional Quarterly* reporter put it, began disrupting Terrell's campaign events. Terrell defensively relayed denials from the White House, but, in the absence of strong counterevidence, it looked like she was aiding a cover-up. Both Democrats and Republicans say the ad—combined with a furious ground operation in the race's closing hours—dragged Landrieu across the finish line.

Democrats have been quick to pronounce Landrieu's victory a blow to Bush and the notion of a 2002 Republican surge. "It was a great day for Democrats," Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle gloated this week, one which "demonstrated without a doubt that there wasn't any overwhelming [Republican] victory at all." But Democrats shouldn't get too cocky. Until she was saved by the sugar story—hardly the basis for a national Democratic message—Landrieu was sinking. Her advisers were panicky both about her support among whites and about the prospect of a weak black turnout. Even in its final days, in fact, Landrieu's campaign was still hobbled by halfhearted support from some key black leaders.

Finding a winning balance between black and white support is the ultimate challenge for Southern Democrats, and Landrieu was no exception. After she failed to win 50 percent on November 5, forcing her into the runoff, she fired most of her top campaign staff. Among other things, Landrieu had never liked their casting of her as a pro-Bush "conservative," preferring the image of an independent "moderate," which was more acceptable to black voters. Landrieu also called in Donna Brazile, Al Gore's 2000 campaign manager, to win over local black leaders who had never warmed to Landrieu—especially an influential Baton Rouge state senator named Cleo Fields. Brazile talked Fields and other black leaders into recording Landrieu endorsements for local radio. Even those leaders who weren't crazy about Landrieu couldn't resist the up to $30,000 in free local media exposure the campaign was offering. (One ad, cut by New Orleans Representative William Jefferson, had him praising Landrieu's education record over warm strains of gospel music.) Most crucially, perhaps, the state's democratic chairman, Ben Jeffers, enlisted Jesse Jackson to press Fields for a mid-November endorsement of Landrieu. Fields finally delivered.

But even those efforts didn't have things locked up by December 7, runoff day. A frenzied Brazile found herself correcting last-minute glitches, such as voter-turnout sound trucks destined for black neighborhoods with white drivers at their wheels. With returns at 1 p.m. showing a perilously low black turnout—perhaps due in part to GOP voter suppression tactics in black areas, such as an insidious flyer explaining that voters could cast late ballots the following Tuesday—the Landrieu campaign put former President Bill Clinton on the phone with Fields to insist ("in blunt terms," a Landrieu aide told the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*) that Fields needed to deliver more votes. Meanwhile, dozens of experienced Democrats from around the country pitched in. Even Fred Hatfield, chief of staff to Senator John Breaux, the state's supportive senior Democrat, wasn't above standing on a New Orleans street corner with a HONK IF YOU VOTED sign.

But none of it would have mattered without sugar, and Landrieu almost didn't deliver the punch that probably won her the election and saved the Democrats from another round of

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GOP gloating and media ridicule. During the conference call on the night the *Reforma* story was unearthed, Landrieu and her advisers debated whether or not to turn the sugar story into a harsh attack ad. That same day, Eichenbaum had shot footage for a positive spot, in which Landrieu spoke gently into the camera, slated to close out the campaign on a softer note. But participants in the discussion say Joe Hansen, a veteran national operative who ran the final month of Landrieu's campaign, was adamant about which course to follow: It was time to throw "a long ball." The sugar story, he argued, could drive home Landrieu's argument that Terrell was a blind supporter of Bush who would sell out Louisiana's economic interests. Landrieu agreed, and Eichenbaum embarked on his all-nighter.

Democrats may claim that Landrieu's victory shows the party does have a winning message. But there may be a different lesson. As Brazile puts it, "You cannot be nice. These people go for the jugular. Mary proved that you can attack them back." Alas, that may be as profound as the meaning of Landrieu's victory gets. ■

White House Watch

Blind Eye

By Ryan Lizza

Now that Saddam Hussein has delivered his long-awaited weapons declaration, the main question in Washington is, when will President Bush prove that Iraq is lying? Saddam has played his hand, and the world expects Bush to put his own intelligence cards on the table. Which is what the administration says it intends to do. "We didn't want to give any intelligence before the declaration," says an American official. "Next week, we'll give as much as we can."

But it's not as easy as it sounds. Many observers, especially administration hawks, hoped the Iraqi declaration would be the perfect trap to prove that Saddam has no intention of abiding by the new U.N. resolution. But there are two good reasons why this won't be possible. The first problem is that the conclusions American officials are likely to draw from the documents won't be clear-cut. Bush and his top aides have repeatedly and definitively said that Saddam has active chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs—statements that lead many to assume there will be a dramatic intelligence disclosure akin to Adlai Stevenson's 1962 U.N. presentation, in which he proved the Soviets were lying by confronting them with aerial imagery of their nuclear missiles in Cuba. Don't hold your breath. Experts will know Saddam has not revealed everything based mostly on what they call a "gap analysis," in which they compare the new declaration with what inspectors and intelligence services know is missing—even if they have no idea where it is. This kind of analysis will hardly be convincing to skeptics.

David Kay, a former nuclear arms inspector in Iraq, knows how hard it is to make this kind of case. Two weeks before the election, Dick Gephardt, facing a revolt among Democrats for backing Bush on Iraq, asked Kay to address the House Democratic caucus. It didn't go well. Kay says he was shocked by "the number of elected representatives who took the position, 'Why do you keep saying they have weapons of mass destruction? Where have you found them? What are they?' Really, the opinion [was], would I bring a warm nuclear device and lay it on the table." After months of bellicose rhetoric from Bush, expectations are even higher. "An argument that rests on doing complicated scientific analysis . . . is not going to be compelling," says Kay.

But perhaps the bigger problem in trying to use the declaration at the end of the process, rather than the beginning, is that the U.S. has now agreed not to. No matter how false the declaration, the administration has promised the Security Council that a material breach can't be reached until Saddam blocks inspections. As an American official intimately involved with the negotiations says, "There has to be an omission [in the declaration] and a failure to cooperate [with inspectors]." This means the declaration alone can't trigger war.

Since the declaration won't be the silver bullet some expected, the next great hope is that the U.S. will start shoveling intelligence to UNMOVIC. But there are problems with this strategy as well, the most important being the good possibility—maybe a probability—that we don't know where weapons are located. Richard Spertzel, the former head of UNSCOM's biological weapons team, recently told Congress that "UNSCOM could not prove Iraq had an offensive B.W. program. Nor did any country, including the United States, provide any intelligence for UNSCOM to act upon to catch the Iraqis." The best intelligence the U.S. collected about the biological program back in the 1990s came from Iraq's importation of growth media, but Saddam can now produce the stuff domestically. And, if Saddam really is using mobile units to keep the program on the road, Spertzel has said it "would be virtually impossible for monitors to identify." Kay concurs. "It is very unlikely that national intelligence efforts can add much clarity to the exact status of Saddam's nuclear program," he recently told lawmakers. "WMD programs have long been the hardest targets for intelligence service to unravel." During the cold war we underestimated the Soviets' enriched uranium by 50 percent, and we had no clue about certain weapons sites and programs—including ballistic missiles loaded with smallpox. And of course, before the Gulf war, we had no idea how close Saddam was to having a nuke.

Bush's national security team also has great expectations for intelligence gleaned from Iraqi defectors, but it may be less useful than conventional wisdom suggests. For one, Saddam has used plants before to fool Western intelligence and embarrass the inspectors. (One "defector" insisted Saddam had buried nuclear material in the central Baghdad

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cemetery.) The other problem is that even legitimate information from defectors becomes useless very fast. Debriefing and vetting a defector and preparing an inspection based on his information takes about one month. Saddam is believed to move weapons sites every 30 days, ensuring that any defector's information is quickly stale. The regime also usually realizes when a defector has gone missing and can therefore remove or destroy anything he knows about. Kay tells a story of going to inspect the office of one particularly useful defector: "As we walked into the building and down the hallway, there were Iraqi security officials lining it, laughing at us and handing the key. This was the cleanest office I had ever seen in Iraq." Kelly Motz, an expert on Iraq's weapons who runs the "Iraq Watch" website, the most detailed archive of open-source material on Iraq's illegal arsenal, is not optimistic. "I don't think they have some clear smoking gun," she says, "and I'm pretty cynical they will ever get a smoking gun."

And, even if they do, there are problems with simply turning it over to UNMOVIC. Under UNSCOM, intelligence agencies worked directly with trusted inspectors on the ground in Iraq. Relationships between intelligence providers and inspectors took months to develop, and the inspectors entrusted with sensitive information often had high-level security clearances from their governments. Intelligence was also two-way: Inspectors gave feedback on what they learned so intelligence agencies could analyze it and provide new information. With UNMOVIC, intelligence must flow through one person besides Hans Blix—James Corcoran, a former Canadian intelligence official whose title is Senior Officer for Outside Information—and intelligence can now flow in only one direction, into UNMOVIC. Gordon Oehler, who worked for the CIA for 25 years and was responsible for providing intelligence to inspectors in Iraq under UNSCOM, says there are two things intelligence agents will require before giving anything to UNMOVIC: an assurance that the information will be protected and a belief that it will be used effectively. "UNMOVIC hasn't met the threshold on either one," he says.

For one thing, while UNSCOM was far from leak-proof (out of 260 inspections, only about six took the Iraqis by surprise), UNMOVIC may be worse. "They have not established security procedures that will pass any muster," says Oehler. "Hans Blix has a history of poor security. When he was at [the International Atomic Energy Agency] ... his organization leaked like a sieve." Kay predicts that, because neither the United States nor the United Nations has been doing background checks on the inspectors, the teams will be filled with spies, Iraqi or otherwise. "In all probability," he says, "this inspection corps has both more intelligence agents than UNSCOM ever had, but, more importantly, doesn't know who they are."

A lot will depend on Corcoran. For months, he's been meeting with intelligence officials from the United States and other governments, giving them "shopping lists" of information UNMOVIC wants, according to a U.N. source. But he's largely an unknown quantity. One story about him from when he was deputy director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, though, is not reassuring. In the mid-'90s, at the urging of a hard-nosed French anti-terror investigator, Corcoran placed the Montreal terrorist cell of Ahmed Ressam under surveillance. Corcoran monitored the men for months but concluded they were just petty thieves. Ressam, wanted on an immigration warrant, was never arrested. A few years later, after a stint in a bin Laden training camp, Ressam was caught entering the United States through Vancouver with a trunk full of explosives to blow up LAX. ■

There Trent Lott goes again.

Separate Ways

By MICHELLE COTTLE

THE ONCE AND future Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, we are told, is very, very sorry. Yes, he silenced the crowd at Strom Thurmond's one-hundredth birthday party by boasting, "I'll say this about my state, when Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And, if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either." And, when the political fallout began and Lott was peppered with questions about the wisdom of saluting his home state's embrace of Thurmond's 1948 Dixiecrat (read: segregationist) candidacy, his immediate response was to dive for cover and have his spokesman issue a dismissive, somewhat insulting statement: "Senator Lott's remarks were intended to pay tribute to a remarkable man who led a remarkable life. To read anything more into these comments is wrong."

But, after a few days of public pillorying, Lott now acknowledges the problematic nature of his tribute. "A poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embraced the discarded policies of the past," reads his updated statement on this matter, released December 9. "Nothing could be further from the truth, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement." While some folks might be troubled by such a wishy-washy apology—"discarded policies" is the best characterization of Jim Crow he could come up with? How about "discriminatory," "unjust," or at the very least "discredited"?—many conservatives seem to think the biggest problem is that Lott's ill-advised utterances were off-message and give the party a bad name. They're wrong. The problem with Lott's little birthday tribute wasn't that he thoughtlessly misspoke. It's that, as even the most cursory review of Lott's history on racial issues suggests, the senator's toast was a textbook gaffe as defined by former TNR editor Michael Kinsley: The case of a politician accidentally saying what he really believes.

Lott has always been honest about the world in which he grew up. Born and bred in segregated, small-town Mississippi, Lott came of age during the heat of the battle for civil rights, and he admits that he fought on the side that opposed "forced integration," which he witnessed firsthand during his

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years at Ole Miss. Young Lott's first political job—which he landed in 1968, just one year out of law school—was as an administrative assistant to one of Congress's most ardent segregationists, Representative William Colmer. Lott learned his trade at the knee of the legendary Colmer, known for using his House Rules Committee chairmanship to block civil rights legislation. When Colmer retired in 1972, Lott ran to succeed him.

By the time Lott achieved elected office, segregation was no longer the politically palatable platform it had once been. Even so, during his 16 years in the House, Lott cast more than a few votes that showed the esteem in which he held the vestiges of his home state's racist past. In 1978, the gentleman from Mississippi led the charge to posthumously restore citizenship status to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Three years later, he lobbied for the restoration of tax breaks for segregated private schools. Representative Lott also voted against school busing and the creation of a federal holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr., opposed continuation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and voted against extending the 1965 Voting Rights Act—twice. He also committed some early, notable "gaffes." In 1984, during his stint as chairman of the GOP Platform Committee, Lott boldly declared that "the spirit of Jefferson Davis" was alive and well in the Republican Party. (Which would suggest that Lott is proud not only of Mississippi's choice for president in 1948 but its choice in 1860 as well.) Worse yet for his current p.r. pickle, *The Clarion-Ledger* reported that in 1980 Lott gave this testimonial about Thurmond at a political rally in Jackson, Mississippi: "You know, if we had elected this man 30 years ago, we wouldn't be in the mess we are today." Thus, it seems last week's birthday remarks were neither wise nor original.

It has been as a senator, however, that Lott has drawn the most attention for his race-related activities. In 1999, the senator found himself furiously evading questions concerning his ties to the "racialist" Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC). When it was first reported that Lott had spoken before the white supremacist group, he immediately denied any "firsthand knowledge" of the CCC's agenda (whose newsletter has been known to warn against miscegenation and the threat posed to Western civilization by "black blood"). But, once it was discovered that Lott had given speeches at other events sponsored by the CCC over the years, that his newspaper column was featured in the CCC's newsletter, that two of his cousins as well as his self-described "favorite uncle" were long-standing members, and that one of the group's national leaders had run Lott's get-out-the-vote effort in northern Mississippi in 1994, the majority leader's denials sounded increasingly flimsy. As for reports that Lott had repeatedly hosted CCC leaders in his Washington office, the majority leader, insisting he was ignorant of the men's affiliation, huffed that he tried to entertain as many home-state visitors as possible and that it was impossible to check the backgrounds of everyone who wanted to stop by.

Eager to quell the controversy, Lott issued a statement renouncing the racist positions of the CCC. What he did not do was sign on to a nonbinding congressional resolution specifically urging lawmakers to reject the group and its views. He claimed that resolutions targeting specific groups were too impractical—despite having recently lent his name to a similar resolution condemning a black Muslim radical.

None of which is to suggest that Lott harbors some long-repressed desire to return to the days of "separate but equal." But neither has he shown, at any time in his public career, much indication that he has turned his back on the "discarded policies" of his Old South upbringing. It's time for the Republican Party to realize that Lott's little gaffes aren't just careless missteps and that such incidents are more than just bad p.r. Commenting on the birthday incident, *The Wall Street Journal* complained, "Mr. Lott played right into the hands of opponents who are eager to paint the Republican Party's Southern ascendancy as nothing more than old-fashioned bigotry." What the *Journal* didn't mention is that by keeping Lott on as majority leader, the GOP isn't just playing into those opponents' hands; it's proving them right. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

State of Denial

By Yossi Klein Halevi

"We've decided not to comment on Iraq." That was the response from On Levy, spokesman for Labor Party prime ministerial candidate Amram Mitzna, after I'd repeatedly asked about Mitzna's position on the war against Saddam Hussein. "Does Mitzna have an opinion on ousting Saddam?" I asked. "Mitzna has many opinions on many things," Levy replied.

Mitzna may not be commenting because he's trying to downplay the fact that he's ideologically closer to Europe than to Washington on Iraq, just as he's closer to Europe on the legitimacy of Yasir Arafat. But no less revealing than Mitzna's refusal to comment on the main issue facing the Middle East today is that his staffers assume he can get away with it. And, so far, they're right. Despite the fact that Israel is likely to be the primary target of a counterattack by Saddam, Iraq is largely a nonissue here. In fact, Levy claimed that I was the first Israeli journalist who had asked about Mitzna's position on Iraq. Reports of imminent war appear in the media, of course, sometimes as headlines. But the public's focus quickly reverts to the latest terror alert. With Israelis worried about surviving the day, the threat of a missile attack in a few months' time can seem absurdly theoretical. "There's just so much fear a person can carry," says Jerusalem novelist David Ehrlich. "When I sit in a café and read about Iraq in the paper, my mind is on who is coming through the front door."

Public support for a U.S. attack on Iraq is solid if not overwhelming, about 60 percent, according to one poll. The

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Israelis' attitude is typical of those who live on a fault line: There's no point worrying about the next earthquake, and hopefully someone somewhere is preparing for the inevitable. Israelis cling to the army's reassurance that Saddam probably doesn't have many Scuds left and that those he does manage to fire will probably be shot down by the Arrow anti-missile system. One Arrow battery has been placed in the fields of Kibbutz Ein Shemer, about half an hour from Haifa. But here, too, it's terrorism rather than Iraq that preoccupies: A few weeks ago, terrorists murdered a mother and her two children in a nearby kibbutz. "I don't even have a gas mask," shrugs Shani Marchevsky, who works in Ein Shemer's greenhouses.

The ability to maintain daily life and ignore danger has allowed Israelis to cope with terrorism, but it's precisely what is preventing the public from confronting the prospect of nonconventional war. Despite constant appeals by the army, complains Shmuel Arad, former head of the army's Home Front Command, there has been no rush by Israelis to update their gas mask filters, which need to be replaced periodically. (That assessment is disputed by Colonel Gili Shenhar, one of the current heads of the Home Front Command. He notes that 2.5 million Israelis—out of a population of about 6.5 million—upgraded their gas masks in the last 15 months and that "most" Israelis are in possession of adequate gas masks, though he refused to say how many Israelis have not upgraded.) Since the Gulf war, every new apartment must contain a fortified room to protect from nonconventional fallout. But older houses remain unprotected, and many shelters in the basements of apartment buildings have been transformed by residents into storage rooms or left in disrepair. In the months leading up to the first Gulf war, Israelis bought manuals on chemical warfare and stocked bottled water and canned food, but there are few signs of such preparedness today. "It's a delicate balance between preparing people and creating anxiety," says psychologist Alan Cohen of the Galilee's Community Stress Prevention Center, located near the Lebanon border. Cohen's group has begun preparing schools to operate during a prolonged stay in shelters, but he concedes that few Galilee residents are psychologically ready. "We're still mostly dealing with terrorist scenarios, not a war scenario."

Confusing messages from the army only exacerbate Israelis' tendency to avoid confronting the unthinkable. The latest is an army instruction that anyone who can reach a public shelter within three minutes of an air-raid siren should proceed there with a gas mask. For those Israelis—up to 40 percent of the population—who won't have immediate access to shelters, the army recommends a return to the Gulf war's "sealed room," a closed-off room in one's apartment with plastic sheets on the windows and wet towels under the door. Yet, by now preferring public shelters, the army has reinforced widespread suspicion that the sealed room is more a psychological comfort than an actual defense and that even one's own home can't provide refuge.

When the reality of Iraq does break through the nonstop discussion of terrorism and elections, Israelis are faced with the terrifying realization that old escape routes are closing. Terrorism has created the sense that no place in Israel is safe, and now the threat of a two-front missile attack—from Iraq on central Israel and from Hezbollah on the Galilee—only intensifies the feeling of entrapment. In the past, northern residents under Katyusha attack were evacuated further south. Now, if missiles fall simultaneously on Tel Aviv, that refuge will be blocked. And, with the attack on Israeli tourists in Kenya—followed by terrorism alerts for Israelis from Thailand to Prague—even the outside world no longer feels safe. The satirical page of the newspaper *Ma'ariv* recently announced that travel agents have begun to offer Israeli tour groups a free escort from "Zaka," the ultra-Orthodox police unit that collects body parts at the scenes of terrorist attacks.

Dr. Roni Berger of the Israel Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War in Tel Aviv notes that Israelis confront war with Iraq with both greater strength and greater vulnerability than they did twelve years ago. On the one hand, they now have more experience coping with stress: While nearly 40 percent say they've been directly or indirectly touched by a terrorist attack, few show symptoms of clinical trauma. Still, their capacity to absorb stress has been tested to the breaking point. "They're coming to a war with Iraq with a lot less resources left," says Berger. "Surviving traumatic events leaves a great strain on the nervous system and the immune system. How much more can Israelis take? People have developed coping strategies for terrorism, like avoiding certain places or going to reserve duty and fighting back. But with Iraq there's a sense of helplessness. It's far easier to cope actively than passively. If the war is over quickly, people will be OK. But, if it goes on, we'll see lots of psychological problems."

To be sure, civil defense experts agree that Israel is probably the best-prepared country in the world for a nonconventional attack. Nonetheless, given the relatively high chance that Israel would be a target of such attack, those preparations may not be enough. At the recent Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel's National Security, an annual gathering of Israel's elite to examine long-term dangers facing the country, civil defense experts warned of a breakdown in authority following an Iraqi missile attack on Israeli cities. Instead of a single government agency to oversee civil defense, authority is dispersed among ministries that don't fully coordinate with each other. In some areas, such as maintaining the economy during emergencies, several authorities overlap. During what passes for peacetime in Israel, a nonconventional terrorist attack would be handled by police; in wartime, though, that authority passes to the army. The problem, noted Arad, is that the transition would happen in the midst of chaos. "It's no small mess," he said.

Yet the next day's newspapers didn't even report those warnings. In this atmosphere, it's no wonder Mitzna thinks he can get away without commenting on Iraq and that he can build a campaign around the promise of unilateral withdrawal from the territories, as if war with Iraq won't change the Middle East and make the plans of Israeli politicians irrelevant. But, should a war begin, and should Israel be targeted, "no comment" won't suffice for long. ■

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The lead industry gets its turn.

Toxic

By JONATHAN COHN

YOU DIDN'T HAVE to be a fortune-teller to see that the October meeting of the Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention was going to be more controversial than usual. The panel, which advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), had been gearing up for a few months to consider whether the federal standard for lead poisoning, set in 1991, should be even tougher. The answer was likely to be yes, given new research linking even modest lead exposure to developmental problems in children.

But, just a few weeks before the meeting, the Bush administration shook up the advisory committee's membership. When it came time to fill a group of vacancies on the panel this year, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tommy Thompson rejected several nominees recommended by the staff scientists at the CDC in favor of five people who seemed likely to look upon further tightening of lead regulations skeptically, if not to oppose it outright. One of the nominees had repeatedly stated that the current standard—endorsed by everybody from the National Academy of Sciences to the American Academy of Pediatrics—was too strict. Another had stated that children could tolerate lead levels seven times the current standard without suffering cognitive harm. Even more disturbing, at least two of the new appointees had direct financial ties to the lead industry: One was a consultant whose clients included a prominent lead-smelting company fighting a lawsuit over pollution in Washington state. Another, a pediatric toxicologist from Oklahoma, had been a paid defense witness in several liability suits against lead-paint companies.

Word of these appointments drew the ire of a few Congressmen, California's Henry Waxman calling it an attempt to "turn back the clock on children's health." And when the panel convened for its October meeting, inside a windowless conference room at a San Francisco Hyatt, veteran members of the panel looked upon the newcomers with some wariness. In an apparent attempt to win their trust through brutal candor, one of the new appointees, Sergio Piomelli, a Columbia University pediatric hematologist, decided to confront suspicions about him and the other new appointees head-on. "Before some reporter detects it," Piomelli said in his thick Italian accent, "I would like you to know that I was called a few months ago from somebody from the lead industry, whom I don't know his name and don't remember, and asked if I don't mind if they nominated me for this committee. I said, 'Yes.' This was my involvement with the lead industry."

Although nobody questioned Piomelli's personal integrity—as he noted for the group, his original research had helped to convince the government to ban lead from gasoline in the 1970s—the idea that the lead industry was going around recruiting nominees seemed to validate suspicions that President Bush was stacking the committee at the industry's behest. And it would soon turn out that Piomelli wasn't the only person the industry approached. William Banner, the Oklahoma toxicologist who has testified on behalf of lead-paint companies, recently told THE NEW REPUBLIC that he, too, got his first contact about the committee from a lead-industry representative. Like Piomelli, he couldn't remember exactly who spoke with him or even whether that person was a lobbyist, a lawyer, or a corporate official. But he recalled that the person said something like, "Do we have your permission to mention your name?" (The other proposed panelist with known relationships to the lead industry, consultant Dr. Joyce Tsuji of Washington state, didn't return repeated phone calls for this article. She withdrew her nomination shortly after it became public, saying she wanted to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest.)

Although HHS officials insist all the panelists' names came up in routine consultations with academic experts and professional associations—"The lead industry had nothing to do with their appointment," says Robert Wood, Thompson's chief of staff—it's hard to take those statements at face value. After all, this is the same administration that removed information about contraception from HHS websites to appease the religious right; that stacked a CDC panel on environmental health with scientists tied to the petroleum industry; and that screened nominees for another CDC panel, on occupational safety and health, by asking would-be members for whom they voted in the last presidential election.

And, while it remains unclear just how these new appointees will impact the lead committee's final recommendations—to a one, they say they have open minds about where the standard should be—it's not hard to draw from this episode a lesson about the Bush administration's political priorities.

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Ever since the November elections, the White House and its allies have put out word that that this generation of triumphant conservatives wouldn't do what the Gingrich revolutionaries did after 1994, tearing down popular regulatory programs in order to satisfy K Street contributors. But, if the lead-panel episode is indicative, the administration is doing just that—and has been for some time.

As environmental hazards go, lead is a pretty nasty one. Prolonged exposure in any human is known to cause such serious conditions as anemia, brain damage, and kidney failure. In children, the effects of even more modest doses can be equally devastating, sometimes causing mental retardation. In the '70s, the government cracked down on the top two sources of lead exposure in humans: gasoline and household paint. But, while the ban on leaded gasoline substantially reduced the nation's exposure to airborne lead particles, it's taking much longer to remove the lead from paint on homes and public buildings since outright removal of paint from walls is extraordinarily expensive. According to the most recent estimates, nearly 40 million homes in the United States still have lead paint either on the inside or the outside. In these homes, small children often end up eating chips of lead paint, which have a sugary-sweet taste, that have fallen from high-friction areas like windowsills or door frames. The problem is most acute in low-income, urban communities where landlords tend to be less responsible about maintenance and where tenants may lack the resources or the awareness to act on their own. To assist physicians and public health officials dealing with this situation, the CDC in 1975 defined "lead poisoning" as the presence of more than 30 micrograms per deciliter of blood; in 1985, it lowered the threshold to 25; and, in 1991, it reduced it to ten, where it sits today.

Naturally, the regulation of lead has never sat particularly well with the lead industry. Petroleum and paint companies fought their respective lead bans furiously at first. And, while neither oil nor paint companies have an interest in overturning the ban anymore—both have retooled to produce lead-free products—they do care about the CDC blood-level standard since it could affect their liability for past actions. Over the years, petroleum, mining, and smelting companies deposited waste containing lead in landfills, exposing their employees to it along the way; a lower CDC standard would mean a potentially higher bill for cleaning up those sites or for taking care of those employees. The paint industry, meanwhile, is already fighting lawsuits that closely parallel tobacco litigation. In one typical case, the Rhode Island attorney general contends the paint industry concealed lead's true dangers for much of the twentieth century and, as such, ought to finance the removal of lead from older Rhode Island homes. A stricter CDC standard for lead poisoning could lead the court, should it find the paint industry liable, to increase the clean-up bill it slaps on the industry.

To be sure, there are some valid reasons to question the most recent lead studies—and the attempt to tighten the existing lead standard—such as the fact that it's hard to measure small disparities in cognitive abilities (i.e., a few IQ points). But it's one thing to question the new studies, quite another to question the entire body of research suggesting that lead could cause intellectual or behavioral problems in children—which is precisely what Banner, the Oklahoma toxicologist, has done. When a lawyer in the Rhode Island paint case asked Banner if studies had ever demonstrated a link between lead exposure and cognitive problems in children, he said flatly, "I don't think anybody has demonstrated that." When a lawyer pressed him, Banner indicated that except in cases of encephalopathy—a severe physical condition that shows up at blood levels of 70 micrograms per deciliter or higher—there was no proof that lead causes "central nervous system deficits or injuries."

These statements seem to put Banner well outside mainstream scientific discussion: "If he's saying there's no such thing as asymptomatic lead poisoning, I'd have to disagree," says John Graef, a well-known lead expert from Children's Hospital Boston who has served on the advisory committee before. "That flies in the face of data ... going back forty years." Banner, for his part, says people have been taking those deposition statements out of context; his questions, he says, echo those that other well-respected scientists are asking. And, he says, he also acknowledges that the current standard "has done a good job" of identifying at-risk patients and says that, whatever his preconceptions, he has an open mind about what the committee should do next.

But, regardless of Banner's intentions and qualifications, it's hard to imagine he and the other lead-industry-connected members got on the panel through a disinterested vetting process. For one thing, nobody whom I interviewed could recall an HHS secretary overruling staff nominations before. (HHS officials insist the move has precedent but couldn't provide any specific examples.) What's more, the list of rejected nominees included some of the best-known names in lead research today. And finally, keep in mind that companies with a significant financial stake in lead-poisoning issues—everybody from Dow Chemical to Dupont to ExxonMobil—all gave disproportionately to the Republicans in the 2000 and 2002 campaigns.

Admittedly, the CDC's panel doesn't have the power to make policy. It merely makes recommendations based on its understanding of available science. But that's precisely the point: To provide lawmakers with disinterested scientific expertise, such panels need to be insulated from politics. That's why the law authorizing the CDC panels says they should "not be inappropriately influenced by the appointing authority or by any special interest." Yet, as a recent *Science* magazine editorial noted, this administration—unlike its predecessors—has largely dispensed with that notion. "Every administration advances its agenda by making political appointments of scientists and managers to direct its agencies. But disbanding and stacking these public committees ... devalues the entire federal advisory committee structure." Alas, that may be exactly what the Bush White House wants. ■

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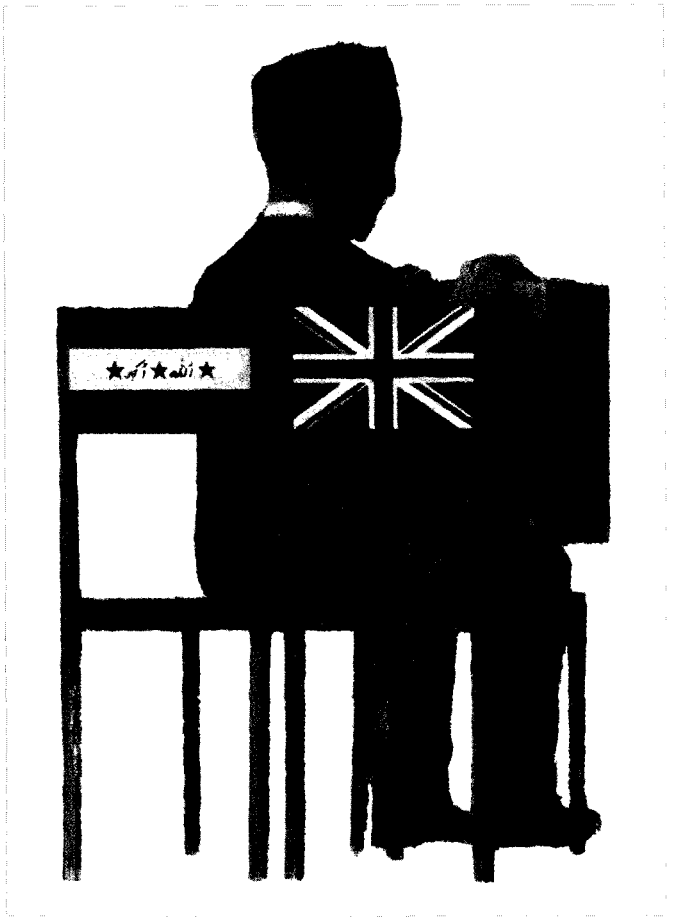
Can the Iraqi exiles remake Iraq?

At Home Abroad

By JASON ZENGERLE



THERE WAS A time when Sharif Ali bin Al Hussein spent many of his days in Baghdad's Al Rihab Palace, home of the Iraqi royal family. And, though Saddam Hussein has since turned the palace into a notorious prison—Iraqis today call the building the "Palace of the End"—Sharif Ali, one of the last surviving members of the royal family, has settled into suitably regal accommodations in London. There, in a five-bedroom, mansion-block flat near Holland Park, surrounded by expensive artwork and silver-framed, sepia-toned photos of his Hashemite relatives, the man who would be Iraq's king bides his time, waiting for the day he will return to Baghdad and the throne. He believes that day is drawing near. "We as Iraqis have learned to be very cautious about predicting the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime," he told me. "Given that, we are in fact the most optimistic we have ever been."

Sharif Ali has all the mannerisms of a king. He is tall and elegant, with slicked-back hair and a neatly trimmed moustache. On the October afternoon I visited him in London, he was dressed in a natty gray suit and sipped tea from a gold-embossed china cup. And listening to him talk—in his crisp, British-accented English—about the constitutional monarchy he intends to bring to Iraq once Saddam is gone, he made it sound as if everything in his future kingdom is set to fall into place. "Iraq has the second-largest proven oil reserves in the world, possibly the largest unproven oil reserves in the world, so Iraq will not have a problem financially," he explained. "The Iraqi people are urban, educated, sophisticated, capable, and industrious. One just has to give them the opportunity to unleash their potential." He went on, "Iraq was the first Arab country to join the League of Nations. It was a signatory member of the United Nations charter. That was before Germany, before Japan, before Italy. This is the tradition." After Saddam falls, Sharif Ali believes, there will be nothing preventing Iraq from returning to this tradition. "We'll be a dynamic part of the international community and the global village," he predicted. "Iraq will be a beacon of progress."

As Sharif Ali spun out his vision of a post-Saddam Iraq in front of me that afternoon, I found myself wanting to believe in it. I have not been alone in that desire. As head of the Constitutional Monarchy Movement and spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress, Sharif Ali was one of six Iraqi opposition leaders invited to Washington in August for consultations with American officials, including Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, and Dick Cheney. Since then, he and a handful of other opposition leaders have worked with the Bush administration on a 100-page blueprint for a post-Saddam Iraq. This weekend, about 350 Iraqi dissidents will meet in London for a conference to discuss that blueprint; it's all but certain the conference attendees will endorse Sharif Ali's—and the other major Iraqi opposition leaders'—broad vision of a democratic, pluralistic, multiethnic Iraq. When American officials boldly predict that they can turn Iraq into the Middle East's first vibrant, functioning democracy, they base their predictions, in part, on what opposition leaders like Sharif Ali have told them.

Unfortunately, Sharif Ali is not the most reliable interlocutor. On the afternoon I met with the would-be king, he sat beneath a portrait of Iraq's last king, Faisal II, who was assassinated in the 1958 officers coup that brought a bloody end to the monarchy. Like Faisal II, Sharif Ali

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is a Hashemite—a direct descendant of the prophet Muhammad. Faisal II was Sharif Ali's cousin, and, since all of Faisal II's immediate family was killed in the coup, Sharif Ali argues that he is the rightful heir to the throne. "The legacy of the monarchy is infinitely better than that of the so-called republican era of Iraq," he said with obvious familial pride. "We had elections, we had a free press, we had a legal system."

But Sharif Ali's claim to that legacy is not entirely solid. Faisal II was Sharif Ali's maternal cousin, and the Hashemite dynasty has traditionally followed a patrilineal line, which is why some Iraq watchers argue that Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan—the late King Hussein's brother and a paternal relative of Faisal II—is a more likely king should Iraq restore its monarchy. Such a restoration, moreover, is far from assured. After all, many Iraqis were not so fond of the monarchy during its existence. Established in 1921 by the British—who, a year earlier, had created Iraq out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and administered it as a mandate—the monarchy was viewed by many Iraqis as a tool of foreign domination. Even after Iraq gained its formal independence in 1932, the Hashemites were often dismissed as British stooges. When Faisal II was killed and the monarchy ended, there were celebrations in Baghdad's streets. And, while Sharif Ali argues that Iraqis now pine for the monarchy's return, it's hard to see how he can know that from his perch in London (where even the organized Iraqi opposition is generally unenthusiastic about a royal restoration). Indeed, remarkably little of what Sharif Ali says about Iraq—about its tolerance, its dynamism, its readiness for democracy—is informed by any personal experience of the country. That's because Sharif Ali has not set foot in Iraq since 1958—when he was two years old.

LONDON IS FULL of dreamers at the moment. For more than 40 years, Iraqis have fled there to escape their native country's string of increasingly repressive leaders: First the military officers who toppled the Hashemites in 1958; then the Baathists who, after seizing power for a short time in 1963, overthrew the military men for good in 1968; and finally Saddam, who took control of the Baathist regime in 1979. As a result, London is now home to one of the largest Iraqi exile communities in the world. And many members of that community nurture dreams of returning to their native country. Sharif Ali aspires to go back as king; others hope to go back as government officials or civil engineers or academics or businessmen. What unites them all is their desire to return to Iraq and assume positions of importance—a desire that, after years of no hope and then false hope and then no hope again, now seems tantalizingly close to being fulfilled.

And not just because the United States appears irreversibly committed to toppling Saddam. Rather, the exiles are most heartened by the fact that American officials, in making plans for what will undoubtedly be the more difficult job of rebuilding Iraq once Saddam is gone, have made it clear that the United States is counting on the exiles for help. The meeting in London this week is just the most public evidence. For the past several months, the State Department—under the auspices of its Future of Iraq project—has brought together Iraqi exiles for discussions on public health, economics, law, political structure, and other areas that will be vital to rebuilding the country. Last week, President Bush asked Zalmay Khalilzad, the special U.S. envoy to Afghanistan, to also serve as the American ambassador to "Free Iraqis," coordinating the exiles. "Iraq will need a big infusion of expertise and know-how after Saddam to create a functioning civil society, and that can very well be supplied by Iraqis in exile returning home," says Ellen Laipson, an Iraq specialist who served as vice chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council from 1997 until earlier this year. "They are part of the elite that built the modern Iraq."

The Iraqi exiles remember Iraq as it was before Saddam, and they hope to use those memories as a guide to rebuilding Iraq once Saddam falls. But memory can be a tricky thing. After all these years away from Iraq, living in the West, are the exiles' memories still reliable? Did the Iraq they remember actually exist? And, even if it did, can it exist again?

IN THE MOSTLY Arab neighborhood of Bayswater, situated among grocery stores that advertise *halal* meat and cafés filled with men smoking water pipes, there is a *diwaniya*, a meeting place, called the Kufa Gallery. The Kufa, which takes its name from the famous city of Arab learning in southern Iraq, is run by Mohammed Makiya, an Iraqi architect who settled in Great Britain in 1974. Makiya established the Kufa to promote Arab and Islamic culture in general, but the gallery retains a distinctly Iraqi character—especially on Wednesday nights, when it hosts a weekly lecture. The programs range from performances of Iraqi music to appreciations of Iraqi actresses to discussions about scholars who studied in the Iraqi city of Najaf. Whatever the week, the topic of the Kufa's Wednesday night lecture almost always relates to Iraq.

On a Wednesday night in early October, when London's streets were unusually clogged thanks to a 24-hour subway strike, I visited the Kufa for an evening of Iraqi poetry. The gallery is deep and narrow, and crammed—from its floor to its 30-foot vaulted ceiling—with Arabic paintings, prints, and books. It is like a tunnel into another world, and, as an Iraqi poet strummed on a lute-like instrument called an oud and recited his verse in Iraqi Arabic, London seemed very far away. About 80 Iraqi men and women were at the Kufa that night, most of them middle-aged and well-dressed. They sat in the gallery's plastic chairs and, as they sipped tea or worried brightly colored beads, they let the poet's verses wash over them. When the poet described the birds that lived in the marshes of southern Iraq, they murmured, "Allah, Allah," in approval. And, as the poet read an ode to the sunrise in Baghdad—a sunrise, he said, that was far more beautiful than the ones in his new home in Denmark—I noticed that some in the audience were softly crying.

One of those crying was a burly man with a thick moustache named Dhia Kashi. A regular at the Wednesday night

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gatherings, Kashi grew up in Baghdad; were he not a Shia, it's likely he would still be there. Although Shia Muslims account for 55 to 60 percent of Iraq's population, the country's Sunni Muslim minority has dominated the ruling elite since Iraq was created as a British mandate in the early '20s. But, though they were generally excluded from Iraq's civic and political institutions, some Iraqi Shia, particularly the secular ones, managed to carve out niches for themselves in the world of commerce. Kashi's family thrived as Persian-rug and antique dealers; and, after Kashi graduated from college in the early '70s, he went into his own business, working for a customs clearing firm that transported imported building materials to construction sites around Baghdad. "I was delivering the foundations of the Meridian, the Sheraton, these type of hotels," he says, recalling an era when large, Western companies were eager to do business in Iraq.

But Kashi's comfortable, middle-class life came to an end when the Baathist regime ratcheted up the oppression of Iraqi Shia. In the '70s and early '80s, the Iraqi government declared that thousands of Iraqi Shia merchants were actually Iranians. The government then stripped them of their Iraqi citizenship, seized their assets and businesses, and moved them and their families to the Iranian border. By conservative estimates, 150,000 Shia were expelled between 1970 and 1981. "My family had lived in Iraq for five hundred years, but, because they are Shia, because they originally came from Iran, the government said we were now considered Iranians. They called us a fifth column," Kashi says. By 1980, half of his family had been deported to the border region. Kashi and his wife plotted their escape, not telling anyone, even family members, of their plans. They first went to Kuwait, where Kashi started a new business. But, four years later, when the Kuwaiti government began arresting Iraqi Shia at Saddam's behest, they fled to London where, like thousands of other Iraqi Shia, they applied for political asylum. "I was thirty-two, and I had to start from zero for the third time in my life," Kashi says.

Kashi told me all this one Saturday morning as we walked around London. He took me to the coffee shop he owns in Dolphin Square—a posh apartment and hotel complex in Westminster—and to a row house near Victoria Station that he's refurbishing as a hair and tanning salon for his wife to run. The next Saturday, he boasted, he would take his daughter to Cambridge, where she will study physics. "I tell her she is lucky she is not in Iraq, or Saddam would force her to help him make bombs," he joked. It seemed that Kashi was lucky, too: The vicissitudes that had characterized his life in Baghdad were distant memories. He does not experience any serious discrimination in Britain; he doesn't worry that there will be a knock on his door late at night. Leaving Iraq, it turns out, has been a good thing for Kashi. And yet, as his tears that night at the Kufa indicated, he longs to return.

In our conversations, Kashi fondly recalled—in minute detail—the ins and outs of his childhood neighborhood and the best items on the menu at his favorite Baghdad pub. But, beyond personal reminiscences, Kashi retains a deep and abiding passion for Iraq as a whole. "It is an amazing country," he said. "We are rich in people, in land, in oil, even in the weather: You can ski in the north in the morning, have lunch in Baghdad, and then go sunbathe in the south—all in the same day." I heard similar sentiments in almost every conversation I had with Iraqi exiles in London. Indeed, sometimes their patriotism crossed into chauvinism, so strong was their belief in the inherent superiority of their fellow countrymen. "Iraqis are respected all over the Gulf because we are intelligent; we are intellectuals, we are doctors, we are engineers, we are the best things," Kashi said. Salah Shaikly, another exile, told me, "There's a saying in the Middle East: The books are produced in Egypt, they are printed in Lebanon, and they are read in Iraq." (Even Iraqis' more ignoble accomplishments under Saddam are a source of pride. "Iraqi scientists managed to, or near enough according to American intelligence, produce a nuclear weapon without direct assistance from anybody!" Shaikly said.)

The exiles boast about the country's once-vital civil society, in which writers and architects flourished, and even women were treated with relatively enlightened attitudes. "My mother had worn an *abaya*, not covering her face but her head, her entire life," an exile named Samira Al Mana told me. "But in 1950 she took it off. ... When the men in Iraq had freedom, the women in Iraq had freedom." They point to the fact that, under the monarchy, Iraq had a parliament and the government was responsive to the popular will. "People could vote, and, if they did not vote, they could go out and bring down the prime minister by demonstrating," Kashi said. Even after the monarchy fell and parliament was disbanded—and the first wave of exiles began fleeing—those who stayed in Iraq maintain that it continued to be a relatively good place. Shaikly, who was a government economist for most of the '70s, argued that under the Baathists—before Saddam became president—the country was on the right track. "We worked on what were called prognostic models, predicting the future outlook for Iraq," he said. "Our forecast was that, if things kept going the way they were going in the mid-1970s, after the oil revenue began to come in, by the year 2000, Iraq would look like southern European countries."

It's one thing to hear neoconservative American officials such as Paul Wolfowitz say that Iraq has a future as a multiethnic democracy; it's quite another to hear this prediction from Iraqis themselves. And, while the subject of whether or not Iraq is actually ready for democracy may be a point of contention in the Washington policy world—where a good many people believe that for Iraq to survive as a viable state Saddam must be replaced not with a democratic government but with a less repressive, pro-Western strongman—in London's Iraqi exile community, it is a settled issue. "A strongman is a dictator," Shaikly said. "We don't want to replace one dictator with another." Indeed, I did not meet one exile who would even entertain the notion that a democratic government should not eventually follow Saddam. When I asked Kashi whether he worried that a democratic Iraq would be torn apart by tribal, ethnic, and ideological conflicts, he put

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his hands to his ears and cut me off. "We feel humiliated and degraded when other people talk about Iraq like this," he said. He went on, "Iraq had two parliaments five thousand years ago. Five thousand years ago! That's Iraq's history. And we feel this in our genes."

BUT HISTORY SHOULD not be confused with memory, and Iraq's history, unfortunately, is not as rosy as the exiles' memories. The period that many of them recall with such fondness—the period from Iraq's inception as a British mandate in 1920 until the 1958 coup against the monarchy—was marked by instability, inequality, and repression. During the twelve-year reign of Iraq's first monarch, King Faisal, the government had 15 prime ministers; even before the coup that toppled the king, there were coups that toppled prime ministers. Despite the tumult and turnover, power in Iraq always remained within a small clique. "Few [politicians] had roots in any large constituencies outside the halls of parliament," Phebe Marr writes in *The Modern History of Iraq*. "Instead, politics ran mainly on personal lines." Those who questioned that political power paid a price. In 1933, after Assyrian dissidents demanding autonomy inside Iraq clashed with government troops, killing nearly three dozen soldiers, the government unleashed the army and Kurdish irregulars on Assyrian villages. Hundreds were killed in the resulting bloodbath. When Shia tribesmen in southern Iraq rose up against the Sunni-dominated government a few years later, the government responded with summary executions and aerial bombing.

And those were the supposed glory years. What followed was worse. The decade of military rule after the fall of the monarchy was characterized by coups and countercoups as rival officers and the political factions aligned with them vied for power. When the officers weren't plotting against one another, they waged a brutal civil war against the Kurds in northern Iraq. In 1968, the Baathists, in league with sympathetic elements of the military, launched a successful coup. Then, learning from past mistakes—in 1963, the Baathists had seized power in a coup only to lose it nine months later in a countercoup—they moved ruthlessly to eliminate potential challengers. Military officers and bureaucrats deemed insufficiently loyal were replaced with Baathist apparatchiks; other real or perceived opponents were accused of espionage, put on trial in secret military courts, and publicly hanged. It wasn't long before the Baathists had taken over the entire apparatus of government and turned Iraq into a draconian, one-party state. Finally, in 1979, Saddam Hussein—who had spent two decades rising through the Baathist ranks—became president of the republic, ushering in a whole new era of misery.

This history has taken a toll. For the most part, the intellectuals, doctors, and other educated professionals in whom Kashi and Shaikly take such pride have—like Kashi and Shaikly themselves—long since left Iraq; an estimated four million Iraqis, disproportionately educated and well-off, now live abroad. Many of those who stayed behind are not similarly accomplished; those who are, such as the country's nuclear scientists, either volunteer or are forced to use their skills to support a brutal regime. And then there are the nearly 14 million Iraqis who were born after Saddam took power and have known Iraq only as it has existed under his rule. They have not gone to decent schools: In 1992, the last year for which reliable statistics exist, Iraq's literacy rate was 62 percent, the lowest in the Gulf. They have not received good health care: In 1990, there was only one doctor per 1,810 Iraqis, again the worst ratio among Gulf nations. And, after the Gulf war and a decade of U.N. sanctions, social and economic conditions in Iraq have deteriorated badly. As the Iraqi scholar Isam Al Khafaji wrote of his native country two years ago in the *Middle East Policy* journal, "It would not be over-pessimistic to talk of an embargo generation that will never be able to recover from the effects of material deprivation, isolation, and a sense of being not only neglected and forgotten but targeted by the international community as an enemy."

Indeed, while it's hard not to admire the exiles' idealism, they are—in their own way—as ideological as their neoconservative allies in Washington. And, like the neocons, the evidence they provide to bear out this ideological vision is not always convincing. "I think Iraq's problem will be much easier to fix than any other problem in the world," Kashi told me. "Iraqis, between them, don't have a problem. It's the rulers who have the problem with the people." It sounded so hopeful I wanted to know more, and I asked Kashi if he had experienced this harmony when he was growing up. "I was young before Saddam," he replied. "But I remember what my father and mother and grandfather told me about Iraq before that. ... They said it was wonderful."

THE LAST TIME Saddam was in serious trouble—after the Gulf war in 1991, when Kurds in the north and Shia in the south rebelled en masse and briefly gained control of 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces—Iraqi Shia in London flocked to the city's *Husaynias*. Dedicated to the Shia martyr Husayn—who was killed in 680 A.D. in the southern Iraqi city of Karbala and whose death became the defining event in the schism between the Shia and Sunnis—*Husaynias* were originally created as places of mourning and study. But over time they have become Shia social centers. In 1991, London's *Husaynias* filled up with Iraqi Shia who sought the latest news—conveyed by faxes and phone calls from Iran, Syria, and sometimes Iraq itself—about what was happening in their native country.

At the Al Khoei Foundation in northwest London, they are expecting the crowds to return. "We were at the center of the intifada in 1991," an Al Khoei official named Ghanim Jawad told me, "and we will be at the center again." The Al Khoei Foundation is located in an imposing three-building compound that, in its previous incarnation, was a Jewish community center. It is home to two Islamic schools (one for boys, one for girls), a mosque, a community center, and offices that serve as the headquarters for the foundation's

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extensive worldwide operations. (The foundation has programs in a number of countries, including India, Thailand, and the United States.) The Al Khoei Foundation is dedicated to serving Shia of any nationality, but unofficially it has a particular interest in Iraqi Shia. That is because the foundation's founder, the Grand Ayatollah Abul Qassim Al Khoei, lived and taught in the southern Iraq city of Najaf and was, until his death ten years ago, the grand *Marja*, the most respected Shia cleric in all of Iraq.

Although there has been much discussion in the U.S. media about the complications that could accompany the post-Saddam reintegration of the Iraqi Kurds, many of whom currently live semi-autonomously under U.S. protection in northern Iraq, the Shia may pose a more vexing problem for Iraq's future. Some Iraq watchers worry that the country's long-oppressed Shia would take advantage of any power vacuum to engage in bloody score-settling against Sunnis. Another concern, especially to some American policymakers, is that an Iraqi government that truly reflected the country's Shia majority would form a natural alliance with the Shia mullahs in Iran. Among Iraqi exiles, Ayatollah Al Khoei is often invoked as a rebuttal to both charges. During the 1991 uprising, they note, Ayatollah Al Khoei issued a fatwa instructing Iraqi Shia to respect people's property and to honor public institutions. And they point to the fact that, unlike his Iranian counterpart Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Al Khoei did not believe that clergy should seek political power. Rather, as Graham Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke write in *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims*, Al Khoei represented "a more quietist tradition that stressed the traits of personal piety and a neutral stand on public affairs."

That tradition, Iraqi exiles argue, is the tradition of the Iraqi Shia. "There is a huge difference between the Shia of Iran and the Shia of Iraq," Ghanim Jawad insisted. A light-skinned man with thinning hair and an open face, Jawad spoke with me in his office at the Al Khoei Foundation, just off a hall lined with pictures of the unsmiling, black-turbaned Ayatollah Al Khoei. Jawad came to London in 1988, after his status as a Shia and his opposition to the Baathist regime made his life in Iraq untenable. At one point, he was arrested and detained. "They hit me with guns," he explained matter-of-factly, taking my hand and running it along a dent in his skull. "I saw how other people were tortured." But Jawad does not hold all Sunnis accountable for his and other Iraqi Shia's mistreatment. "The oppression did not come from any problems between Shia and Sunnis," he said. "The oppression came from Saddam. He used the difference between Shia and Sunnis as a predicate because he needed to stay in power." That difference has never mattered much to Sunnis and Shia themselves, Jawad said. He recalled that when he was growing up in southern Iraq, members of the two sects frequently married one another. "There is not any disharmony at the grassroots between Shia and Sunni," he said. He continued, "If we get rid of Saddam Hussein and his gang, the rest of the Sunni of Iraq are normal, quiet, good people. And we would live with them without any problems."

But, while it may be true that, left to their own devices, Sunnis and Shia in Iraq would live in relative harmony, Saddam has not left the two communities to their own devices—and his brutal persecution has almost certainly left deep wounds. One need only look at the 1991 uprising. Although exiles boast that Al Khoei issued his fatwa against score-settling, they usually fail to note that his edict was largely ignored. As Andrew and Patrick Cockburn note in their book *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, the intifada was a "spontaneous and leaderless fury." As such, it was an exceedingly bloody and destructive affair. In Basra, Shia rebels raided a hospital and took away three patients who were security men, killing one of them on hospital grounds. They also set fire to the city's Sheraton Hotel. In Najaf, a Baath functionary was hacked to death with knives; others were hanged. Many Sunnis fled for their lives from southern Iraq. Making matters worse, an Iraqi Shia exile named Mohammed Baqir Al Hakim—who lives just across the border in Iran and operates an opposition group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), with the support of the Tehran regime—tried to take command of the rebellion. His allies put up posters of him and Ayatollah Khomeini all over southern Iraq, and announcements in Al Hakim's name claimed full authority over the intifada, instructing rebels that "no ideas except the rightful Islamic ones should be disseminated." Thousands of members of SCIRI's militia, known as the Badr Brigade, crossed the border into Iraq to join the fighting.

It is what happened next, however, that makes the notion of future Sunni-Shia harmony seem sadly implausible. After the rebels had gained control of almost all of southern Iraq, Saddam struck back. As U.S. airplanes circled impotently overhead, Saddam's Republican Guard units swept into the south and, in a matter of days, routed the rebels. From helicopters, government troops poured kerosene on fleeing refugees and then set them on fire with tracer rounds. Tanks bombarded and ultimately razed entire city centers. In Basra alone, more than 1,000 Shia were killed. Some claim that the regime killed 300,000 citizens in putting down the intifada. After the uprising was crushed, Saddam sought revenge. The Iraqi leader forced the 90-year-old and increasingly frail Ayatollah Al Khoei to travel to Baghdad and read a statement on television denouncing the rebellion. Al Khoei was then sent to Kufa and placed under house arrest, which lasted until his death the next year. Saddam went after other clerics as well: About 100 of them disappeared without a trace, and, since then, several important Shia clerics in southern Iraq have been killed or have died under mysterious circumstances. In 1992, the Baghdad regime ordered the construction of a huge canal in southern Iraq called the Saddam River. This had the effect of draining southern Iraq's marshes, which had been home to, and later a hiding place for, many Shia rebels; an estimated 500,000 marsh inhabitants were displaced. As Fuller and Francke write, "The Iraqi state has moved from a policy of discrimination to one of active repression of the Shia."

In London, among the exiles, much of the anger over the intifada's failure is directed at the United States. It was the

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first President Bush, after all, who encouraged the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam, only to abandon them once they did. "When the intifada happened, King Fahd and Hosni Mubarak called the Americans and said, 'Stop Schwarzkopf. Don't let him go to Baghdad, because there will then be another Shia state that will ally with Iran,'" Jawad told me bitterly. And, he said, the Americans listened. "They allowed Saddam Hussein to devastate the intifada." But, in southern Iraq, the Shia do not have the luxury of shaking their fists at a far-off superpower. They have more immediate tormentors, and their collective anger—should they ever get the opportunity to exercise it—will likely be directed at more immediate targets.

ON THE SECOND floor of a dilapidated building in the London suburb of Ealing, Saad Bazzaz presides over a media empire. A short, round man in his early fifties, with a thick moustache and large glasses, Bazzaz is the publisher of the *Azzaman* newspaper, a pan-Arabic daily that, as Bazzaz likes to say, is the world's only independent daily newspaper run by an Iraqi. *Azzaman* has been publishing for only five years, but it already has three editions—one printed in London, one in Bahrain, and one in Algeria. In addition to the daily paper, *Azzaman* publishes a monthly current-affairs magazine, a semi-annual culture magazine (which, Bazzaz boasts, is "thick like a phone book"), and a number of books—ranging from Arabic translations of Jean-Paul Sartre to reportage on Afghanistan. Entertaining me in his office one afternoon, Bazzaz barked at his secretary to bring him copies so he could show them off. Unlike some Arabic-language publications in London, all of *Azzaman*'s offerings are slickly and professionally produced. "We're very keen about the design of our publications, the paper we use," Bazzaz said. "Having good thoughts is not enough." It's an indication of Bazzaz's media ambitions that in choosing a title for his paper he picked *Azzaman*—the Arabic word for "time."

Displayed on a credenza in Bazzaz's office is a gallery of photos of him meeting with famous Arab leaders: Bazzaz with Jordan's late King Hussein, Bazzaz with Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Bazzaz with Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and so on. About the only Arab notable missing from Bazzaz's collection is Saddam Hussein. This is surely not for lack of a picture of the two of them together. For much of the '80s and into the early '90s, Bazzaz held a succession of important posts in Saddam's information machine: director-general of the Iraqi national news agency; head of the government ministry that oversees all Iraqi radio and TV programming; editor of the official Baath Party newspaper, *Al Jomhourieh*. In Baghdad, Bazzaz was a big and important man. But he eventually had a falling out with Saddam, or, rather, Saddam had a falling out with him. In 1989, when Bazzaz was in charge of Iraqi television and radio, he was summoned to meet with the Iraqi leader. As Bazzaz memorably recounted to Mark Bowden of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Saddam wanted to know why Iraqi television was not airing all the poems and songs in praise of the Iraqi leader that people frequently sent to the station. Bazzaz explained that he had been spiking some of them because he thought they were too amateurish to warrant broadcast. In a stern tone, Saddam told him, "Look, you are not a judge, Saad." Bazzaz defected from Iraq in 1992.

Generally speaking, there are two types of Iraqi exiles in London: those who had to flee Iraq because they opposed the regime and therefore Saddam wanted to kill them; and those who had to flee Iraq because, even though they didn't necessarily have any problems with the regime—indeed, they may well have been part of the ruling regime—Saddam still wanted to kill them. Bazzaz falls in the latter category. Today, he is unapologetic about his time spent working for Saddam. "During the Iraq-Iran war, many of my generation served the government because we felt that if our ruler was bad, the other side was worse," he told me. "The *world* was standing with Saddam in his war against Khomeini."

People like Bazzaz present a dilemma for those mapping out Iraq's future. Not only did some Iraqi exiles once serve in Saddam's regime—just last month a leading Iraqi opposition figure, Nizar Al Khazraji, was indicted in Denmark, where he now lives, for war crimes he allegedly committed as the Iraqi military chief of staff in the '80s—but countless Iraqis still in Iraq have, at some point, done Saddam's bidding in one way or another. What should be done with them? Some exiles argue that Iraq should undergo a rigorous "de-Baathification" process akin to Germany's "de-Nazification" after World War II. "Anybody who was part of the killing machine," one exile told me, "cannot be part of Iraq's future. . . . Some of them are as bad as Saddam." But many, many people were technically part of that killing machine. In a totalitarian state like Iraq, it can be difficult to stay completely clear of the ruling regime. The Baath Party, for instance, has two million members. The military has close to 400,000 soldiers. And then there are the nearly one million Iraqis who, according to the most recent figures from just after the Gulf war, are on the government's civilian payroll.

That's why other exiles define that machine narrowly. "There is a difference between those who actually, physically do have blood on their hands and those that merely had to succumb to the will of a tyrannical regime," Sharif Ali told me. Like many exiles, he cited the horrific stories of Iraqis who, after balking at Saddam's orders, had their family members jailed or killed. "The regime is so ruthless, they would rape a minister's wife and videotape it and then show it to him," he said. According to the opposition groups working with the Bush administration, the most likely solution for determining who actually has blood on their hands is a truth and reconciliation commission of some sort. But even that commission, some exiles argue, should be extra careful in making its determinations. "We can't hold everybody up to an overly stringent standard," Sharif Ali said. "We're not all saints."

Bazzaz evidently believes he would meet the kind of standard Sharif Ali proposes. When Saddam falls, Bazzaz thinks there will be a huge hunger for news in Iraq, and he's anxious

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to feed it; he plans to move *Azzaman*'s headquarters to Baghdad. "Our paper has credibility," he boasted. "We don't say in our news articles, 'Saddam Hussein, the Butcher of Baghdad, did so and so.' We say, 'President of Iraq Saddam Hussein did so and so,' but, by the end of the article, from the facts we've provided, you know he's the Butcher of Baghdad. We don't need to say it." But Bazzaz has ambitions beyond his media empire; he envisions a political role for himself as well. Bazzaz is savvy enough to know what passes for acceptable political discourse these days. "We need a new open society, a new open economy, a new free speech," he told me. But, unlike most of the exiles I spoke to, he did not talk about democracy in universally glowing terms. "If you have democracy in Egypt, do you know who would win?" he asked. "The fundamentalists. ... Sometimes the democracy can bring the bad people." More than anything, it seemed, Bazzaz wanted to be a big man again. "As long as I am Iraqi, I have to pay attention to the future of my country," he said. "I am dreaming of a new Iraq. ... If I could play any role to reach this goal, I am not going to hesitate."

To a man, the Iraqi exiles I spoke to—and, with only two exceptions, they were all men—insisted that, once Saddam was gone, they would return to Iraq or, at the very least, split their time between London and their native country. It seemed to be a point of pride. "If there is stability in Iraq, there is no reason to live outside," Bazzaz replied brusquely when I asked him if he planned to go back, as if he were offended by the question. Given the exiles' rosy expectations about what awaits them in Iraq—a tolerant and educated populace, a slew of business opportunities, the places they remember frequenting as children and young adults—their attitude is not surprising.

But the exiles' return to Iraq will not be easy. For one thing, there is the simple matter of comfort: The country's infrastructure—its buildings, its roads, its water system—will be considerably below the Western standards to which the exiles have become accustomed, especially if Saddam is toppled by a massive military campaign. Perhaps even more of a problem than creature comforts, though, will be the attitudes of their fellow Iraqis once they return. Even if the people of Iraq are as well-adjusted, after years of living in a brutal, totalitarian state, as some of the exiles believe them to be, there is no guarantee they will welcome the returnees with open arms. After all, they have suffered under Saddam's rule in ways the exiles can hardly imagine. Indeed, while American officials are eager for the exiles to play a prominent role in a post-Saddam Iraq, they are also wary that the exiles do not overplay their hand. For the past few months, the Bush administration has had to repeatedly persuade some opposition groups not to declare a government in exile for fear of angering Iraqis living in Iraq.

One evening at the Kufa Gallery, I did meet one exile who seemed to have a sense of how difficult his return to Iraq could be. His name was Rasheed Al Khayoun, and, as a lecture was going on in the main gallery, we talked in hushed voices in a small side room. The room doubled as a kitchenette and a supply closet and was cluttered with digestive biscuits and empty picture frames. A short, rumpled man with wild black hair and slightly bloodshot eyes, Al Khayoun is the culture editor of the Iraqi National Congress's weekly newspaper and the organizer of the Kufa's lecture series. But his real passion is teaching, which is what he was doing in Iraq before he had to leave in 1979. He taught Arabic and geography at a primary school in Baghdad, which didn't bother the regime at all. Away from the classroom, however, Al Khayoun—like many Iraqi intellectuals—was active in Iraq's Communist Party; and when, in the late '70s, Baath officials began cracking down on the Communists, Al Khayoun realized it was time to leave. "If I do not go out," he told me in his broken English, "I'm killed." He abruptly left his job at the school and abandoned his apartment; for two months, he hid at a friend's house in Baghdad while he waited for another friend in the government to secure him travel papers, which permitted him to take a brief trip to Turkey. With papers in hand, he drove across the border. And then he kept going—first to Bulgaria, where he spent several years completing a doctorate in Islamic philosophy, and then to Yemen, where he taught philosophy for more than a decade. After running afoul of the Islamic party there, he moved to Great Britain in 1992.

Like all the other Iraqi exiles I talked to, Al Khayoun was insistent that, once Saddam was gone, he would return to Iraq. It was obviously a matter of principle to him, but he had professional reasons as well. In London, where his imperfect command of English has prevented him from getting a teaching job, he has had to scrape by, doing his newspaper work and running the lecture series; when we talked, he was wearing a stained white oxford shirt and threadbare gray trousers. In a liberated Iraq, Al Khayoun could probably get an academic position and make a good living. "The university under Saddam is very, very bad," he said. "Now they need to build a new university, because it is so bad." He thinks that he could help with that.

But, as we continued to talk, Al Khayoun admitted that he had some concerns about returning. He lamented that in his boyhood home in southern Iraq—where 4,000 years ago, he said, Sumerians performed surgeries—there are now no hospitals or even doctors. There are no televisions or computers, either. Al Khayoun said that when he speaks on the phone with his brother, who still lives in southern Iraq, sometimes he does not understand him. I asked if it was because he no longer understood the dialect. "I understand his language," Al Khayoun explained, "but I can't understand his morals. All he thinks about is how to give food to his children. Here, my daughter goes to music school, and I can buy her books. My brother has nothing like that." Al Khayoun was speaking even more quietly now—as if, more than not wanting to disrupt the lecture, he did not want the others to hear his doubts. He glanced over his shoulder. "I have not been there in twenty-three years," he said, his voice practically a whisper. "Will I recognize Iraq?" He ran a hand through his wild hair. "Will Iraq recognize me?" ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Two Kinds of Space

AN AUSTRALIAN FILM called **Rabbit-Proof Fence** (Miramax) seems at first to be about courage. But it goes deeper than that: it nestles in that region where courage is irrelevant. Courage is about choice. This film is about longing, a tribal longing. Ultimately, the tribe in question is mankind.

Three girls in western Australia in 1931 are at the center of this true story. They are so-called half-caste—white fathers, aboriginal mothers. They live with their aboriginal families, in poverty but in completeness. Molly (age fourteen), her sister Daisy (eight), and their cousin Gracie (ten) are abducted by the state. The government has instituted a policy—it lasted from 1905 to 1971—of taking half-caste children from their villages to a government training center where they are taught to become housemaids or farm laborers. These children are taken forcibly, if necessary. The rationale behind this policy, believed to be beneficent, is the belief that, three generations later, the aboriginal strain in the descendants will be winnowed out. White culture, with a kindly smile, will have purged them.

The three girls, with Molly as leader, escape from the training camp, without food or money (though there would be no place to spend it), and start for home. Their village is twelve hundred miles away. They are not consciously brave: they just want to get home. Their guide is the rabbit-proof fence that the government has built through this vast territory, which they follow. (Thus the film's title is mildly symbolic.) So the government is both oppressor and unwitting savior. Forth the children plod through bleak, brown, broiling immensity.

Christine Olsen's screenplay is taken from a historical account by Doris Pilkington Garimara. (At the end we glimpse the survivors, now old women.) Factual though the film is, it is hard to understand how the government, searching for the escapees with horsemen and autos, cannot find the children in this otherwise empty 360-degree space. They certainly try. Kenneth Branagh, as the supervising official in Perth, plots with maps like a general, trying to recover the fugitives for Australian culture. But, with bits of help from the few people they encounter, the girls move on. One of them, Gracie, falters and dies. Molly carries her sister piggyback, and after nine weeks they eventually win through. Their mother hides them in the woods because officers are waiting for them. A closing title tells us that Molly later had two girls of her own who had trouble with that governmental program. But apparently all eventually became well.

The aboriginal actors have that strange combination of the mysterious and distant along with the open and sunny. They are creatures proudly from another world who can be absolutely charming in ours. A drama coach helped the girls and obviously put them at ease. The pivotal role of Molly is played by Everlyn Sampi, who is a sturdy, taciturn treasure.

The director, Phillip Noyce, is an Australian who has made assorted films, including two of the Tom Clancy numbers, *Patriot Games* and *Clear and Present Danger*. But Noyce has treated this story almost like a page of holy writ. If he has erred, it is in the very awe of his approach. Many of his shots are from the ground up, making mural-esque figures of his people. Many, many close-ups show us feet, shod and unshod, trudging across the screen to take us back to earth. One anomalous shot in particular is a small blemish. Toward the end, a helicopter looks down on the two surviving girls in the middle of vast brown space—an intrusive emphasis and a breach of our point of view. The music by Peter Gabriel is incessantly large and exalting: a smaller, lyric score might have been more help.

But the shortcomings do not much dim the appeal of the story—how these three children set out on this enormous journey with nothing to sustain them but their longing for the place where they belonged and for the people they belonged to.

In 1891, George du Maurier wrote *Peter Ibbetson*, a novel about a man who can enter a dream world where he rejoins his lost beloved. (Deems Taylor made an opera of it in 1931, and Paramount made a film of it in 1935.) In 1941, Noël Coward wrote *Blithe Spirit*, a play in which a deceased wife returns in spirit to trouble her husband's life, and in 1961 Stanislaw Lem wrote a novel called *Solaris* in which a husband is re-united with his dead wife aboard a spaceship. It was from the last of this (sort of) line that the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky made a film in 1972, and it is from Tarkovsky's film that George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh made their **Solaris** (20th Century Fox).

Chris Kelvin, a psychologist, has lost his beloved wife, and through a series of events too complicated to explain (even if I understood them) he accepts an invitation from a friend to board a spaceship that will travel to the orbit of a planet called Solaris. Strangest of the strange events that occur on the spaceship there, Kelvin re-meets his wife, Rheya. He is amazed yet happy—or happy yet amazed. Later he learns that, in this Solaris space, he is creating the returned Rheya out of his mind, conforming her to his wishes. Complications, mostly bewildering, follow. Neither before nor after do we understand why Kelvin was invited on the trip, who provides the spaceship, how (or if) he returns, or what the ending signifies.

Soderbergh's designer Philip Messina has Kubricked the environment—the automatic doors, the television screens gushing equations and formulas, the tables and chairs so metallic that they chill us. The music by Cliff Martinez predicts that there will be no melody in the future, only distended organ-like chords swelling and diminishing.

What the story is after, apparently, is a kind of humanization—rather, a spiritualization—of science. The technically whizbang space travel and instruments and gadgetry are shown at last as a means to more than scientific adventure. By some unexplained means, metaphysical surprises that have nothing do with science are made possible by science. If I am right in this inference, I certainly wish that it had been developed into a cogent picture. Soderbergh, the writer and director, has slowed his metronome almost to a crawl, has repeated and delayed and protracted, in an attempt at depth. The net effect is a small paradox: incomprehensibility caused by drag, not by rush.

Natascha McElhone, who plays Rheya, is one of the most unusually beautiful women now on the screen and does all the

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acting here that she needs to do. George Clooney, a pleasant man, tries sincerely to give some credibility to Kelvin, and if he doesn't earn our belief, at least he has our sympathy. In the film world Clooney and Soderbergh are now two of the most powerful figures. Over a century ago Lord Acton noted that power corrupts: now we learn that one of power's possible corruptions is high-minded vacuity. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Prescient Plays

THERE OUGHT TO be a category for dramatic works that foretell significant changes, whether in society or in social philosophy, along with changes in theatrical style. Ibsen's *A Doll House*, to take the obvious example, prophesied a future of emancipated womanhood through a new form of domestic realism; Strindberg's *The Father* featured a powerful mix of classicism and naturalism in order to forecast the debilitating effects of female liberation on male identity; Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* predicted that our thoughtless consumption of energy would lead to ecological disaster, while his *Cherry Orchard* foresaw the revolutions of 1905 and 1917; Pirandello's *Right You Are* dramatized a breakdown in the boundaries between illusion and reality in a theatrical foreshadowing of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Even such older plays as Euripides's *Bacchae* and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* can be interpreted as harbingers of the counter-culture and the sexual revolution, which is why both works were so popular on American stages during the 1960s and 1970s.

I recently saw two fine examples of prescient plays on the same day—Caryl Churchill's **Far Away** at the New York Theater Workshop (in association with the Royal Court Theatre) and Georg Büchner's **Woyzeck** at BAM's Harvey Theater (performed by Copenhagen's Betty Nansen Theater). Büchner was an oddity, and his *Woyzeck* was unprecedented in the nineteenth century, but Churchill has been writing this kind of play for at least three decades. I first came upon her work thirty years ago while reviewing theater for the London *Observer*—a piece called *Owners*, about the usurious rents that London landlords were gouging out of the poor. Conventional enough on the surface, *Owners* had something fierce and incendiary boiling in its gut. The writing impressed me enough to request a meeting with the young dramatist, during which I tried to cheer her up about the rather tepid reviews that she had been getting in other newspapers.

In the intervening years, Churchill has emerged, to my mind, as the most interesting English playwright of her generation—more versatile than the minimalist Harold Pinter, more profound than the intellectual skywriter Tom Stoppard, more unpredictable than the locked liberal David Hare. If she is less appreciated, that may be because she is not as easy to identify, being always ahead of the game in her style and her subject matter: the arbitrariness of women in power throughout the centuries (*Top Girls*); the inequities of the English class system and the rigidity of conventional sexual roles (*Cloud Nine*); the rapacity of the London Stock Exchange dramatized in Elizabethan blank verse (*Serious Money*). Lately she has grown more interested in formal experimentation, not always to the best effect. (Her recent effort at modern myth-making, *The Skriker*, struck me, like its title, as almost completely inert and incomprehensible.)

Far Away, another experiment in form, is one of Churchill's most oblique and enigmatic works, but it is also one of her most tantalizing. The drop curtain—a cartoon countryside with a moon—promises an idyllic fable, and so does the voice singing "Far far away, there is a happy land," which, along with the sound of lapping water, accompanies the rise of the curtain. On stage, sitting in an armchair, is a middle-aged woman named Harper (Frances McDormand), cutting out pages from a magazine. Soon she is joined by Joan, a sweet little girl in a white nightgown (Gina Rose, alternating performances with Alexa Eisenstein). Joan is convinced that she is hearing night noises. Half-illuminated by shafts of Rick Fisher's eerie, painterly lighting, she could be a figure from a domestic play, say *The Member of the Wedding*, begging her mother for a bedtime story.

Harper, who turns out to be the girl's aunt, tries to find ways to comfort her ("It's always odd in a new place"). But their terse exchanges reveal that the woman and the girl have radically different views of what is happening outside. As Joan confesses more and more of what she has heard ("It was a man screaming") and what she has witnessed ("I saw my uncle pushing someone in the shed"), Harper's consolations are gradually revealed as shams and cover-ups. People are being loaded out of a truck; some, including a child, are being hit with a stick; there is blood in the backyard—each revelation contradicts Harper's trumped-up explanations ("He was putting a sack in the shed," "Your uncle is helping these people," "That's where the dog got run over"). At the end Harper can say only, "You're part of a big movement now to make things better."

In the succeeding scenes, Joan, grown into a mature woman, is working in a hat workshop together with a man named Todd. The creations that she molds, blocks, and dyes (strikingly conceived by the costume designer, Catherine Zuber) become increasingly fantastical as the scenes riffle by, until the moment when the purpose of all this creative millinery is made manifest. In an extraordinary *coup de théâtre*, what seems like an endless parade of men, women, and children, chained at the legs and wearing gray convict uniforms with numbers, march down a flight of stairs in groups of five to the accompaniment of a deafening brass band. Above them, a group of note-taking judges evaluate the quality of the hats that the departing convicts are wearing atop their bowed heads. In the next scene, we learn that Joan has won the competition. We also learn that all the hats have been incinerated ("You make beauty and it disappears"), along with the convicts who were wearing them. "It seems so sad to burn them with the bodies," remarks Joan, to which Todd answers: "No, that's

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the joy of it. The hats are ephemeral. It's like a metaphor for something or other." It is, indeed, a metaphor for something or other, and that something grows increasingly monstrous and threatening in the phantasmagoric final scene.

We are back in Harper's living room. Water is dripping into a bucket. Harper, now an old woman, tells Todd, now Joan's husband, "You were right to poison the wasps." Wasps are the enemies of their allies, the horses, and butterflies may be involved too. Cats have come in on the side of the French and are killing babies in China. Crocodiles, however, are a subject of conflict. Harper knows they are evil, and accuses Todd of being on "the other side" when he disagrees. Both conclude that although deer were once hateful ("they burst out of parks and storm down from mountains and terrorize shopping malls"), they have now come over to the right side, their natural goodness shining through their soft brown eyes. When Joan comes in, she reports that the weather is on the side of the Japanese. Gravity, pins, heroin, chainsaws, grass are all on the wrong side. Maybe even the river. Everything on the planet, whether animate or inanimate, has divided into sides in a war that has grown literally world-wide.

Churchill wrote this play two years ago, probably thinking of Bosnia and Serbia. Today the play inspires thoughts of Islamic fundamentalists and their war on the West, of George W. Bush and his "axis of evil," of the Tutsis and the Hutus, the Pakistanis and the Indians, the Palestinians and the Israelis, indeed of the way the entire globe is dividing up into Us and Them. Churchill's fifty-minute play, mostly well-acted under Stephen Daldry's meticulous direction, may be the ultimate paranoid fantasy; but like so many paranoid fantasies, it is quickly becoming a deadly accurate description of modern life on this planet.

Woyzeck is another paranoid fantasy that proved prescient. Büchner composed these dramatic fragments in 1837, leaving the work unfinished (and undeciphered) at his death at twenty-four. Stylistically, the play anticipates German Expressionism, soaked as it is in a feverish, hallucinatory drizzle that would later drench the plays of Frank Wedekind, Bertolt Brecht, and Heiner Müller, not to mention the films of Robert Wiene, Fritz Lang, F.W. Murnau, and G.W. Pabst. Thematically, *Woyzeck* is driven by a cold, implacable view of humankind that would be reinforced a century later in Hitler's death camps and medical laboratories.

The plot is based on the life of a regimental barber who, having murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy, was later hanged in the first public execution in Leipzig in thirty years. There was much debate at the time over whether the barber was mad or sane. Büchner treats the question as moot. Woyzeck is almost certainly mad, but then so is the entire world, especially the world of officialdom. A regimental doctor, for example, who has been keeping Woyzeck on a diet of peas, praises his beautiful aberration and offers him a raise for going insane.

This kind of play has always been red meat for experimental theater directors (not to mention advanced composers such as Alban Berg), and many of them have cut their second teeth on it. Now Robert Wilson has created—with a brilliant Danish repertory company and some inspired collaborators in music, sound, and design—what may very well be the finest production of the play to date (it is certainly among the director's finest works to date). Those who identify Wilson as a precious avant-garde artist appealing to a European coterie may be unaware of how often he collaborates with American artists from the pop world—Laurie Anderson in *Alcestis*, Charles "Honi" Coles in *When We Dead Awaken*, Lou Reed in *Time Rocker* and *POEtry*, Tom Waits in *The Black Rider* and *Alice*—in order to invest his work with demotic rhythms. In *Woyzeck*, aided by gritty barroom ballads by Waits and Kathleen Brennan, Wilson has largely succeeded in making what is generally regarded as a highbrow curiosity into a hugely entertaining musical.

Wilson's contribution is a blend of scenic displays and magical lighting effects that turn Büchner's barren landscape into a truly alien universe. But he has combined this visual gift with increased attention to acting values. Every character has his Brechtian *Gestus*: Woyzeck, "running through the world like an open razor blade," is played by Jens Jorn Spottag as a jogging machine in perpetual motion; the stunning Kaya Brüel, examining her red fingernails, plays and sings the role of his wife Marie in an insinuating manner that alternately recalls Dietrich, Piaf, Louise Brooks, and (at comic moments) Madeleine Kahn vamping Peter Boyle in *Young Frankenstein*; the Doctor is played by two actors, male and female, as Siamese twins joined at the hip, as if this Mengele-like physician had become the victim of his own mad experiments; and Tom Jensen splendidly plays the Drum Major like a silent-movie heavy so impressed with his own masculinity ("Ooh, I am a man") that he has virtually become a strutting phallus. Indeed, all the members of this wonderful company act (in impeccable American English) and sing (usually in imitation of Waits's gravelly growl) as if they were destined to play these particular roles.

The piece is filled with Wilson's customary imagistic dazzle—Woyzeck's hand turning red as he contemplates the murder of Marie, a huge black eclipse behind him when he plunges his knife into her breast—and his whimsical humor, most notably a vocalizing monkey who ends his song with a cough. But the most impressive element is the Waits-Brennan score. The tinny music, performed by an expert ensemble, often sounds like Kurt Weill sozzled on booze, and the dirty jokes and rude limericks make us feel like we are in an army barracks. These interpolations seem oddly appropriate to the action, and so does the way the songs combine classical proverbialisms with modern sentiments ("Call no man happy until he dies/ There's no milk at the bottom of the pail"). The score adds significant pathos to an already poignant story, particularly the yearning sense of loss permeating "Coney Island Baby" ("She's a rose, she's a pearl/She's the spin on my world"). Indeed, this latest Wilson/Waits/Brennan take on a modern classic may well be the finest new American musical of the year.

A final word about not just a prescient play but a prescient woman in a prescient play. The Melbourne Theatre Company production of **The Aunt's Story,** which I saw during a recent visit to the Brisbane Festival, is based on a novel by Patrick White, Australia's most popular writer. It has been adapted and directed by Adam Cook, with seven gifted transforming actors playing twenty-seven roles. This overly long and sometimes disjointed episodic work revolves around an ugly duckling with a poetic soul named Theodora Goodman. As embodied by Helen Morse, Theodora is a dour, melancholy, and increasingly embittered woman who at first reminds one of the spinster aunt Agnes Moorehead played in Orson Welles's *Magnificent Ambersons*.

Theodora is a plain girl with an attractive sister and an unloving family, which virtually dooms her to spinsterhood. Indeed, her headmistress prophesies that she will never marry ("You will be both honored and despised")—bad news that helps propel Theodora on a picaresque journey from Australia to France to the heartland of America, in which locations, over a number of decades, she witnesses most of the major traumas of the early

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twentieth century.

Her journey also takes her beyond the boundaries of reason into a world of madness (reflected in the changing styles of Cook's production from Victorian Sydney to Bohemian Paris to a demented middle America). Believing herself endowed with special visionary powers, Theodora senses that there's "another world, isn't there, and it's in this one." Gradually she enters deeper and deeper into that other world until, by the end, she is politely led by a doctor in a black hat and a black suit to a mental institution where she will spend the rest of her days. Theodora meekly follows him, saying, "All my life I've only craved one thing—lightning."

It is probably obvious how much this sounds like the last scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, an analogy further suggested by the increasingly misty and filmy style of the production. White's novel and Williams's play both appeared in 1947, so it is unlikely that either writer knew the other's work. But that is the nature of prescience—the capacity to transfer energy and understanding through time and space without the aid of visible means of communication. ■

David as Goliath

By Robert M. Solow

Memoirs by David Rockefeller

(Random House, 496 pp., $35)

Some fifty years ago Richard Rovere identified John J. McCloy as the Chairman of the Establishment. God knows McCloy had the credentials: partner, at different times, in two of the best-connected Wall Street law firms; special assistant to Secretary of War Henry Stimson in 1940, then assistant secretary during the war; adviser to Franklin Roosevelt; president of the World Bank; high commissioner for occupied Germany, and finally, in 1953, chairman of the Chase National Bank, where he succeeded Winthrop Aldrich, son of the onetime Republican Senate Majority Leader Nelson Aldrich. It is not exactly a coincidence that Winthrop Aldrich was David Rockefeller's uncle.

David Rockefeller was disappointed that he never developed a close personal relationship with McCloy. He attributes this to a certain resentment on McCloy's part of Rockefeller's easy wealth and social status. McCloy had no particular advantages at birth, and had to work his way through Amherst College and Harvard Law School. He earned summer money as a tutor, and seemed to have a clearly etched memory of looking for such a job on Mount Desert Island: he trudged up a long hill to the perfectly enormous Rockefeller summer retreat, knocked on the door, and was turned away by the butler with the explanation that a tutor for the children had already been hired.

Rockefeller reports that "Jack must have told that story in my presence a hundred times, the last time in 1985 when I succeeded him as chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations. The story always made me feel uncomfortable." He also expresses some puzzlement about the point of the story. After all, what was the butler to do? But he goes on to recognize that McCloy's hostility might have been deepened by something that his brother Nelson (that's Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller) may have said to him when McCloy became chairman at Chase: that "the family had used its influence" to secure McCloy's appointment, and that he was expected to make sure that "David would succeed him when he retired." Well, yes, one can see how that might have soured the relationship from square one.

In 1969 Rockefeller did become chairman of what was by then Chase Manhattan Bank, but not with any noticeable help from McCloy, and only after a long and tense struggle with George Champion, who represented the more traditional loan-officer sort of banker against Rockefeller's wish to move Chase into the international arena, financing trade and investment. Rockefeller also succeeded McCloy as Chairman of the Establishment. There cannot be a whole lot of worthy committees or boards of which he was not at one time or another a member or chairman. Typical of the man, and much to his credit, he seems to have been a generous donor to those same safely and visibly worthy organizations. And can my memory be right that he describes keeping a file of some 100,000 names of people whom he had known or visited or hosted or done business with? You can bet that anyone on that list would be glad to take a call from David Rockefeller.

Hemingway was right: the rich do have more money than the rest of us. But it is what comes along with the money that is interesting. Rockefeller appears in these memoirs as a thoroughly decent man of middling talents whose practical reach is enormously extended, and whose perceptions are significantly limited, by his inescapable role as a member of the archetypical rich and powerful family. On the whole, you would have to say that he has done very well with the cards that he was dealt. If there has to be a Chairman of the Establishment, you could do a lot worse than David Rockefeller; and the way things are going, you will.

Inevitably, family matters take up a lot of the book. The story begins with the original John D. Rockefeller ("Grandfather," 1839–1937), who started as a $5-a-week clerk in a dry goods store in Cleveland and ended by monopolizing the oil industry (until the Standard Oil Trust was dissolved by court order in 1911) and making himself the richest man in America. His grandson, perhaps understandably, dismisses the muckrakers and paints Grandfather as a visionary industrial statesman. John D. was indisputably a great philanthropist. He took care of his family first, of course; but he founded the University of Chicago in 1892, the Rockefeller Institute (now Rockefeller University) in 1901, and the Rockefeller Foundation in 1911, and made other substantial gifts along the way. Was this enough to get him through the eye of a needle? Rockefeller rejects the notion that Grandfather was using philanthropy to burnish an image that badly needed burnishing. As a grandson, he prefers the tale of a deeply religious man driven to good works. It really doesn't matter.

The story of John D. Rockefeller Jr. ("Father," 1879-1960) has complexities of its own. It cannot have been easy being Junior to the great oil baron. From his son's remarkably candid report in these memoirs, John D. Jr. was moralistic and

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formal; his preferred method of communication with his children seems to have been letters, usually long on monitory advice. After suffering a nervous breakdown in his thirties, Father withdrew from Standard Oil and turned to philanthropy. There he could hope to carry on and extend his father's example; the oil industry no longer offered that possibility. And he did innovate foundation-giving on a large and successful scale.

Father's big moment in the public eye was a disaster. In 1913, the United Mine Workers led a massive strike in the Colorado coal fields, over the issues of representation and wages and working conditions. Grandfather owned 40 percent of Colorado Fuel and Iron; he and his advisers were not exactly sympathetic to the miners. There was private violence, and even more of it when the National Guard was called out. In April 1914, in the course of a larger battle, eleven women and children suffocated underneath a burning tent. After the "Ludlow Massacre" there were more deaths until eventually federal troops arrived.

Father was called to testify before congressional committees. He took a hard line. When asked if management could not have done something to head off the violence, he replied that the strikers could only have been appeased by recognizing the union, and that would have been wrong for the industry, and also of course for the workers. For *this* you allowed all that carnage and all those deaths? Father was adamant: it is a great principle. Grandfather and the family elders thought that Father had been wonderful. Ninety years later, David Rockefeller tends to let his father off too easily. Ancestral piety is perhaps a good thing, and Father was a child of his time as well as of his parents. But his son is not obtuse; he should have called callousness callousness.

All this background is important. To be a Rockefeller is to be a self-conscious Rockefeller. David Rockefeller was the youngest of Junior's six children. Abby, the oldest and the only girl, never bought into being a Rockefeller. She opted out, and we hear little about her. The five sons—"the brothers" John D. III, Nelson, Laurance (spelled thus in honor of Grandmother Laura), Winthrop, and David, born in 1915—all made their marks, in different ways. Before that, however, all except John—who was tutored at first and then followed his father's footsteps to Brown University—went to the Lincoln School on West 123rd Street in Manhattan. Father believed in exercise, so every morning the four brothers put on their roller skates in the mansion on 54th Street just west of Fifth Avenue and started off uptown. Nelson and Laurance might make it to 96th Street, Winthrop and David only to 72nd Street, where they would be picked up by a trailing car driven by a former coachman. Father was remote and unforthcoming, and Mother had some complications of her own, so it must have been a lonely childhood. Weekends at the vast Pocantico Hills estate in Westchester, summers at Seal Harbor on Mount Desert Island: the youngest brother seemed to have some empathy with Winthrop, who was only three years older. But the older brothers kept to themselves and there was no doubt some sibling rivalry even then.

Rockefeller went to Harvard—his own choice, not the family's—and felt a little unprepared socially among all those preppies. But he made a few good friends, got mostly B's, and did some traveling. Father doled out the money carefully, especially to the younger brothers; but when gift and estate tax rates rose in 1935 he chose the lesser evil and established a $16 million trust fund for each of the children. (That is $200 million apiece in today's prices.) Access to the money was limited at first, and Rockefeller says that he was told the size of the trust fund only several years later.

The account of Rockefeller's undergraduate years mentions a few outstanding teachers—the surprise is A. P. Usher, an imaginative but personally dry economic historian—but leaves one unprepared for his decision to do graduate work in economics. Maybe it was a small declaration of independence, though he offers only the merest hint of that. He consulted W. L. Mackenzie King, the longtime prime minister of Canada and a friend of Father's since the aftermath of the Ludlow Massacre. They agreed that a career in government or international banking might make sense for him, and that a doctorate in economics would be useful preparation and would also "give me credibility with people who otherwise might feel that any job I had was principally because of my family's influence." I read that remark as admirable rather than cynical.

Rockefeller stayed on for a year of graduate study at Harvard, took solid courses with important professors, worked hard and enjoyed it. He then moved on for a second year at the London School of Economics. The family had been generous with LSE, so his way was smoothed. His recollection stays pretty much on the surface. He enjoyed Hayek and Robbins and disliked Laski. This was 1937–1938, so there must have been a lot of talk about Keynesian economics. Hayek and Robbins were opposed; Robbins later recanted what he came to see as an error, while Hayek compounded it. Rockefeller does not seem, at least in this retrospective telling, to have understood in any depth what it was all about. He socialized with the family of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, made some lasting friends, and traveled on the Continent, including a chilling look at Hitler's Germany. And then it was back to the University of Chicago to finish his doctorate. Grandfather's money had practically founded the university, but that was not why he chose it. In 1938 there were not many places to study economics seriously other than Harvard, LSE, Columbia, and Chicago. One can understand why he shied away from Columbia and New York City.

At Chicago, he admired Frank Knight and Jacob Viner and, somewhat surprisingly, Oskar Lange. Lange was an émigré Pole—he returned to become Poland's ambassador to the United Nations after the war—and a mathematical economist whose achievements included a serious theory of market socialism. He was also a supremely clear lecturer. Rockefeller was comfortable with the leave-it-to-the-market atmosphere of Chicago economics. Ever the moderate, however, he remarks that he finds Milton Friedman's take-no-prisoners approach excessive; but anyway this was before Friedman arrived in Chicago. Of course the Rockefeller name gained him the sort of social life that an ordinary graduate student would not experience. This had at least one good result: he came face-to-face with Midwestern American isolationism, and he did not like it.

After a year in Chicago, he decided to go back home in the fall of 1939, live on his own at the Pocantico Hills estate, and work on his doctoral dissertation in isolation. This was an odd decision; most dissertations profit a lot from daily give-and-take with professors and fellow students. The main attraction of Westchester was that he was beginning to court Margaret (Peggy) McGrath, to whom he proposed in the spring; they were married in September 1940. He may also have found the social distractions that trail after any Rockefeller a bit much.

His dissertation was called *Unused Resources and Economic Waste*, and it was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1941. The title turns out to be sexier than the text. Rockefeller began to think about the topic with Hayek in London; the fairly narrow question that he wants to discuss is whether unused capac-

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ity in the form of idle plant and equipment is always an indicator of "waste." The answer is not always. In some circumstances, they also serve who only stand and wait. Given demand and cost conditions, it may be better for the individual firm and even for the economy as a whole for some capacity to be temporarily idle. The circumstances are spelled out in the dissertation in adequate detail.

You might expect that anyone writing on "unused resources" in 1939 and 1940 would be drawn irresistibly to the topic of unemployment and depression. Rockefeller was of course aware of both; in the thesis and in the *Memoirs* he takes care to distance himself from those who would meet the problem by a combination of benign neglect and sermons about the need for lower wages. But the Ph.D. thesis manages fairly blandly to sidestep the question of poverty in the midst of potential plenty. Even in a long chapter discussing three attempts to measure the productive capacity of the American economy as a whole, Rockefeller is content to point out—correctly—the theoretical shortcomings that burden each of them.

This is more than nitpicking, but less than realism. He does not stop to ask whether those studies convey a clear message that transcends their crude assumptions and their empirical shortcuts. In those days, in Chicago and elsewhere, economics was discursive rather than analytical, and in some respects rather blinkered. (The thesis contains some footnote references to Keynes and *The General Theory*; these evince a somewhat greater understanding of Keynesianism than Rockefeller had picked up at LSE, but he and others at Chicago had still not come to terms with it.) In retrospect, given its time and its place, *Unused Resources and Economic Waste* was a pretty good book. Rockefeller knew what he was talking about, and he expressed it clearly.

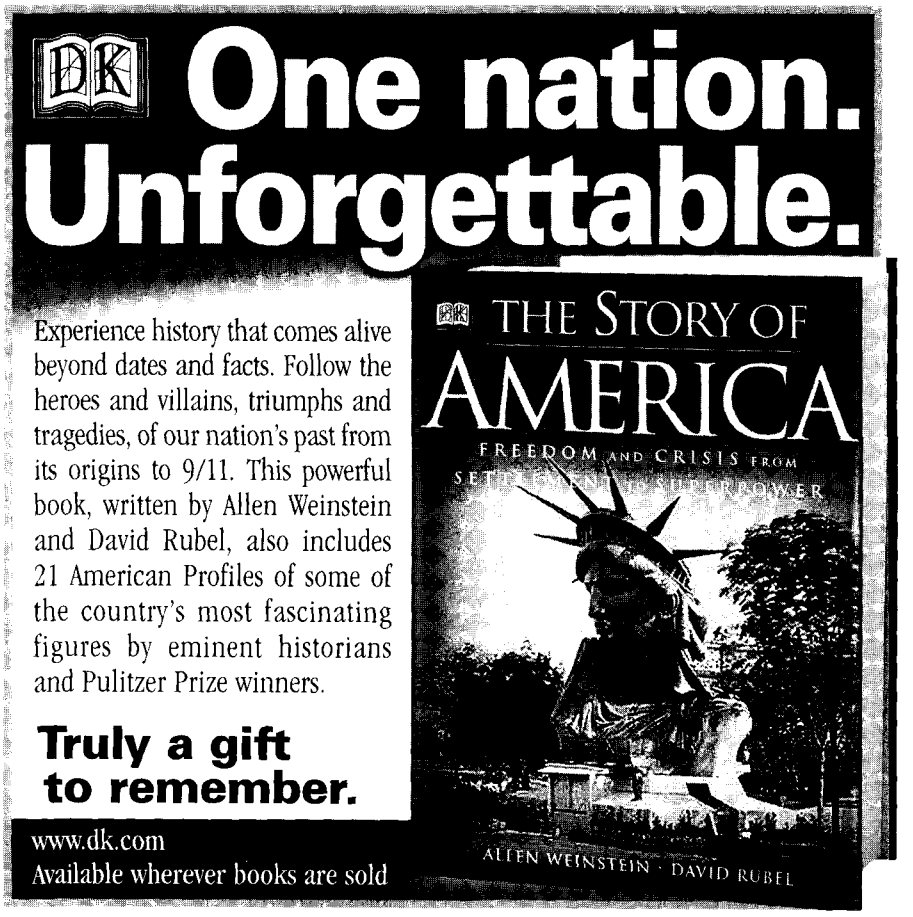
He still had no clear career path in mind. Connections got him a job as an unpaid assistant to Fiorello LaGuardia, then mayor of New York, starting on May 1, 1940. That must have been entertaining and exciting; but now events were taking over. A year later, the United States was gearing up for war production, if not yet for war. Anna Rosenberg, a New Deal associate of FDR's, mostly on labor affairs, and one of the Connections, had become head of the New York region of one of those "alphabet agencies" of the time. She recruited Rockefeller to be assistant regional director. He agreed; and there was his first salary. Three months later came Pearl Harbor.

By early 1942, Rockefeller had not only a wife but also a child. On that account alone, he would not have been drafted for a while; his defense-related job and Anna Rosenberg's pull made him even safer. But his mother thought it was his duty to enlist, and so, really, did he. Family influence could easily have gotten him an immediate commission; but in March 1942 he chose instead to enlist in the Army as a buck private. (His brother Winthrop also enlisted and became an infantry officer.) Still, there may have been a little action behind the scenes: not many enlistees got to do their basic training on Governor's Island in New York Bay, or were then assigned to counter-intelligence. After a few more postings, Rockefeller applied to Officer Candidate School, was accepted, and eventually was commissioned.

Rockefeller's war was spent mostly in Algiers and Paris, in "intelligence" work. This was political intelligence and seemed to consist largely of establishing a network of well-placed friends and acquaintances who could provide inside information about local politics and personalities. It sounds like good training for international banking, which indeed—as he recognizes—it somewhat resembles. After VE Day, and even before he was discharged, Uncle Winthrop Aldrich invited him to start his civilian career at the Chase Bank, which, since Grandfather's time, had been closely associated with the Rockefeller family's interests. Rockefeller had a genuine hankering for government service, but in the end destiny had its way, and destiny was probably right.

Now the father of three children—with three more still to come—Rockefeller began to commute by subway and work his way up through the Foreign Department of Chase. That fit nicely with his own interests, already whetted by military service and student travels. He reports an early realization that Chase was deficient in its management technique, and also in its failure to see that Europe and Latin America offered a growing and profitable market for the services of a well-heeled and knowledgeable bank. He spent six years in the Foreign Department starting to repair that deficiency, with at best minor success. In 1952, he was promoted to senior vice president, this time with responsibility for Chase's New York branches and retail banking.

In addition to being a banker, there was the small matter of being a Rockefeller. Intergenerational transfers of wealth and power are often difficult; and the difficulty is disproportionately greater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when there is a lot of wealth and power to transfer. When the family re-assembled at the end of the war, the brothers needed to establish their rights and their roles. (Abby had claims, too, but she was not an active player in the family drama.) At Nelson's initiative, the brothers held regular meetings at which David, the youngest, was saddled with the job of secretary. They invited Father to meet with them, but he would not. There was evidently a lot of tension, and a very unclear balance of power, both between and within generations. Even before the war they had incorporated the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as a way of systematizing and amplifying their extensive philanthropy while still paying attention to their individual preferences. Initially the brothers made annual contributions to the fund, but eventually they provided it with an endowment.

One of Father's great contributions to New York City was to push through and to underwrite the construction of Rockefeller Center in the depths of the Depression. It was an enormously expensive and complex project—Columbia University owned the land and collected rent—and yet by 1948 it had never paid its way. Father owned all the common stock and held a bundle of interest-free IOUs. The brothers, especially Nelson, saw a profitable future for the center. They, again especially Nelson, persuaded Father to sell his stock to the brothers at appraised value, and then to donate his notes to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, thus providing the fund with the eventual foundation of an endowment, when the center was able to repay its debt.

The brothers then proceeded to overcome Father's initial refusal and induce him to sell the Pocantico Hills estate to them. That was in 1951, when Father was already seventy-seven years old. (He lived nine more years.) The brothers had more or less taken over. The Standard Oil monopoly trust had disappeared forty years earlier; but the third-generation Rockefellers still could continue the family philanthropic tradition. David Rockefeller's main interests were the University of Chicago, the Rockefeller University (née Institute), and the Museum of Modern Art. Later he became a major donor to the Council on Foreign Relations and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Back at the bank—by December 1956 the Chase Manhattan Bank, after a major merger—Rockefeller was promoted to vice chairman of the board and George Champion became president and chief operating officer. It was obviously a two-horse race to succeed McCloy as chairman and CEO. Not only that, Champion supported traditional bank lending, whereas Rockefeller wanted urgently to compete with City Bank (later Citibank) and the Bank of America by building branches and business in Europe, Latin America, and the Far East. Life at the top was tense at Chase Manhattan. The two clashed even over the art displayed at Chase Manhattan Plaza. (Guess who wanted Remington and who backed modern sculpture.) Rockefeller doesn't try to hide the white knuckles, but he tries fairly successfully to be a gentleman on every page. When McCloy retired in 1961, Champion was named chairman and Rockefeller became president and chairman of the executive committee, both designated as co-CEOs. An initial showdown at Chase Manhattan Plaza was followed by "an extended and often unpleasant struggle for primacy." "An unpleasant struggle": if Rockefeller will show this much emotion in public, the struggle must have been ghastly. It never got better. Champion retired at the end of the decade, not without help, and Rockefeller at last ruled Chase Manhattan.

THE EFFORT TO make Chase into a global bank was not an instant success. There were bumps and failures on the road, some of them at home. In the mid-1970s, Chase was in deep and public trouble. Its internal management system was antiquated, its real estate investments went sour, and Citibank pulled visibly ahead. There were rumors that Rockefeller's position as CEO was insecure, and the rumors were not false. The favorite indoor sport of the American press is kicking a man when he is down, so much of this was played out in public. The bank's board gave Rockefeller three years to restore efficiency and profitability, and—with some luck and generously acknowledged help from others—he pulled through.

The narrative details and the later course of Chase under Rockefeller's leadership are not terribly interesting. One is struck, however, by the extent to which he saw his role as would-be global banker to consist of rubbing elbows with the rich and the famous and the powerful—the sort of thing that is called networking when it is done by the lower echelons. It is basically implausible that anyone named Rockefeller should be caught up in name-dropping for its own sake, but these memoirs are full of names. Clearly Rockefeller thought—maybe rightly—that this was the best use he could make of his time and energy in the interests of Chase (and the public good). But that very style reveals, from time to time, its own blinkered character.

Consider the case of the Shah of Iran. Rockefeller had done business in Iran, and wanted to do more. He had met Reza Shah Pahlevi—who may at the time have been richer than Rockefeller—on the ski slopes at St. Moritz, and they had talked oil and banking. But there was no personal relationship, no special warmth. When the Shah was overthrown and exiled, there were not many countries that would offer him asylum. The Carter administration had done so at first, but changed its mind when it decided to try working with the pre-Khomeini government. Rockefeller got involved, and I do mean involved, in pressuring the Carter administration to take the Shah in, and, when that failed, in finding some other haven for the deposed king, and especially in arranging for temporary hospital treatment in the United States when the Shah was diagnosed with cancer. (About the same time, President Carter invited Rockefeller to become secretary of the treasury, or possibly chairman of the Federal Reserve. He turned down the first job because he found too many differences of opinion about fiscal policy. He turned down the second because he thought that draconian monetary policy might be needed, and a very rich banker would not be the right person to be tightening other people's belts. That war was left to Paul Volcker, who certainly wasn't rich.)

These efforts got a lot of press; Rockefeller remembers a one-hour interview in which 90 percent of the questions were about the Shah. In his view, his role in this melodrama was entirely humanitarian: he was helping a refugee. I think there is no reason to doubt that this is how it appeared to him. He does not seem to ask himself seriously why this refugee had a greater claim on his compassion than thousands of others, or whether this was the best available outlet for humanitarian energies.

Here is a more trivial but equally revealing example. As a "proud internationalist," Rockefeller has been involved in public and probably constructive organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations. He has also participated in private groups of self-important people, like the Bilderberg conferences and the Pesenti Group, that undoubtedly appear to be more conspiratorial and meaningful than they are, and may even, for that reason, do more harm than good for the causes they favor. He was one of the founders of the Trilateral Commission, an organization that once got a lot of publicity and may still exist, for all I know.

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The three sides of the Trilateral Commission were North America, Europe, and Japan; Rockefeller's intention was to draw the Japanese—then thought to be the wave of the future—into discussions of international policy and "world order." The group was private but not secret. It consisted of the usual suspects, the rich and powerful and prominent. They commissioned papers, published some, held discussions, and tried to influence their governments. Since these were influential people, they sometimes have had some influence. There was criticism, some of it exaggerated, of this self-appointed lobby. Rockefeller finds this hard to take. "We assembled what we believed were the best minds in America. The Europeans and Japanese assembled delegations of comparable distinction." But of course these were only the best minds on David Rockefeller's Rolodex, and that is neither a surefire nor an unbiased way to identify the "best minds."

Inevitably, some of the freshest and most interesting material in the *Memoirs* concerns the affairs of the Rockefeller family. There is a late chapter, for instance, on the affairs of Rockefeller Center, which are much too complicated to be adequately summarized here, but too fascinating to ignore entirely. In the 1980s, the joint ownership of Rockefeller Center by the brothers presented legal problems. Columbia University, as the landowner, had veto powers. After much negotiation, Columbia allowed the brothers to sell the stock in Rockefeller Center, but only to the 1934 trusts that Father had set up for the next and later generations. That solved the legal difficulty, and provided each of the brothers with a nice piece of cash.

But it put squarely on the scene another set of players: the trustees, an able and strong-minded group who saw it as their duty to protect the assets and to carry out the terms of the trust, not to cater to the wishes of the brothers. When the brothers, through the entity they had created to run Rockefeller Center, proposed a broad plan of extension and diversification, the trustees balked, and forced drastic revisions. The conflict simmered—or boiled—for years. Eventually the trustees decided that it was too risky to allow the stock of Rockefeller Center to form such a large share of the trust's assets. And that, children, is how Rockefeller Center got sold to Mitsubishi, which did not do too well with this baby. This is high drama, right smack in the middle of Manhattan, and Rockefeller tells it well, though naturally from his own point of view. It is well worth reading, but don't wait for the movie.

The generation that followed the brothers is—had to be—quite different. When the cousins meet, the room is crowded: counting Abby's two, but not counting Nelson's much younger two by his second marriage, there were twenty-two cousins, one of whom—Nelson's son Michael—died in 1961. There is no way that the cousins could have presented a solid Rockefeller phalanx. Nor did they want to do so. Some were radicalized by the Vietnam War; others used their relative financial independence to pursue individual interests, some of them very different from the traditional family interests. (One of David Rockefeller's daughters, I am very glad to say, earned a Ph.D. in economics, and stuck with it.) I said "relative" financial independence, because sheer numbers and persistent philanthropy have reduced the immense concentration of wealth that lasted into the brothers' generation. That is certainly a good thing. Rockefeller properly says little about his children. He found it hard to understand their choices and attitudes, but in the end he is reconciled.

Decisions, decisions. Being a third-generation Rockefeller effectively excluded some choices, but opened up many more. From the record, an open-minded reader would have to say that David Rockefeller avoided the pitfalls, built a character for himself, and acted it out honorably. He was "a good soldier" in the old-fashioned, non-pejorative sense. The memoir he wrote is remarkably candid. ■

Laughter and Forgetting

By James Wood

Ignorance
by Milan Kundera
translated by Linda Asher

(HarperCollins, 195 pp., $23.95)

It is not entirely unfair to suggest that Milan Kundera may be a didactician of the comic rather than a comic novelist. He has written many times about Rabelais, Cervantes, and the eighteenth-century novelists, and remarked that without the sense of comic joy that those writers impart, no great work can be done. "The novel is born not of the theoretical spirit but of the spirit of humor," he has observed. Yet his own fiction has lacked their comic abundance, and recently their joy. *Ignorance*, his latest novel, is really a series of dramatic scenes held in a suspension of exegesis. It is too light to feel like medicine, but there is no escaping its air of prescription. Two Czech émigrés, one from Denmark and one from France, return briefly to their homeland not long after the collapse of communism. We follow them in their attempts to make sense of their new country, and of their marginal but privileged positions in it.

Some of their encounters are mildly comic, and the book ends, in the familiar Kundera fashion, with a wild and supposedly comic erotic reckoning. Around these slim, sketchy, almost hypothetical scenes, a witty essayistic voice theorizes: about the etymology of the word "nostalgia," about Odysseus returning from long exile to Ithaca, about the modest but passionate nationalism of the Czech people. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* has an Odyssean form, but *Ignorance* has an essay about Odysseus. Such works are successful when the proportion of commentary to dramatic action feels poised and each mode nourishes the other. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* was such a book, the exegetical and the fictive beautifully imbricated. *Ignorance*, for all its local delights, is an angry book compressed into a slight one, and it seesaws between slender theorizing and slender storytelling. It has a comic and ironic form—because both of the émigrés' returns are so ridiculously futile—but it barely musters the comic content needed to enflesh that form.

So what is Kundera's distinctive comic spirit? Like all modern Czech novelists, he reveres Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Švejk*. Yet Hašek does indeed seem to belong to the Cervantine tradition, and the little soldier Švejk, who blunders into World War I through a combination of idiocy and dumb calculation, is really a

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Sancho Panza living on into an age that is no longer epic, and no longer comic either. Hašek does indeed possess the joy and the simplicity that Kundera so values; by comparison with the slyly unself-conscious Hašek, Kundera is exactly the kind of writer he claims not to want to be—a theoretical one.

Bohumil Hrabal, whom Kundera has rightly praised as Czechoslovakia's greatest modern novelist, once commended Freud's writing on comedy as "typically Central European, and essentially typical of Prague." Freud was especially interested in what he called "broken humor," "humor through tears," in which a sympathy we have prepared for a character is blocked by a comic occurrence and transferred onto a matter of secondary importance. The frustration of sympathy only intensifies it. This is a fine definition of Hrabal's sweet comedy, which is one of blockage, cancellation, and gentle absurdity; Hrabal used to say that he drew his worldview from a dry cleaner's slip he came across in Prague, which warned clients that "some stains can only be removed by the destruction of the material itself."

Kundera clearly draws on the absurdism in both Hašek and Hrabal, but insofar as both writers' visions are rooted in human folly, in the overflowing and congested soul, Kundera does not seem quite a comedian of the human, in this sense. The truth may be that Kundera is more interested in what comedy can do for his purposes than in how it naturally occurs. He is drawn to the noble utility of comedy in a totalitarian age, and is thus forever marked under the sign of a certain pressure.

He must know, even if he cannot quite admit it, that the kind of free, humorous joy open to Cervantes, Sterne, Hašek, and even Hrabal (who, unlike Kundera, was never an exile) is barred to a writer who has been effectively expelled from Eden by his own country. There is no return to this earlier sense of comedy, precisely because comedy has been forced to become functional: it is now one of the arrows to be used against humorless communism. The liberal anti-ideological writer, living in France and writing in French, may build his canon of Rabelais and Sterne, but since he is exiled from his country he is necessarily at war and cannot go about it in the same easy way a French writer can. Even as he disdains ideologies, he becomes, in his very need to co-opt that disdain for his purposes, something of an ideological writer.

So it is that Kundera's books resemble arguments on behalf of the importance of comedy rather than free enactments of comedy, and one reads his brilliant fiction in exactly the way one reads his brilliant nonfiction (such as *The Art of the Novel*). His first novel, *The Joke*, completed in 1965, is a beautiful work, full of moments of humor and pathos. It is the foundation of all of Kundera's later writing. Like *Ignorance*, it is an angry book, as angry as its protagonist, Ludvik Jahn, who is determined to avenge his expulsion from the Party and his sacking from the university. Ludvik has been cast into political darkness because of a foolish postcard he sent to Marketa, an ideologically fierce woman in whom he is interested. Marketa lacks a sense of humor, while Ludvik, though a Communist, is temperamentally skeptical and witty. His card, designed to provoke her, makes fun of the Communist ideals of optimism and progress, and praises Trotsky. Marketa hands the card to a party official, and Ludvik soon finds himself arraigned by joyless communism and sentenced accordingly.

The Joke is sometimes funny, but above all it is a book about the importance of being funny. It is itself an exercise in what might be called the weaponization of humor. Ludvik's joke, constructed in all innocence, loses its innocence as soon as it is brought under the category of the political. The rest of the book involves Ludvik's attempt to restore innocence to his joke by avenging himself on his persecutors. Similarly, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* argues on behalf of "diabolical" laughter, in a marvelous essay about halfway through the novel. But its own laughter seems muted.

In fact, Kundera seems to me not at all a writer in the mild tradition of Cervantes, Sterne, Svevo, and Hašek, but an increasingly French moralist, devoted to the correction of illusion in the style of Diderot and Molière, and as formalized by Bergson in his influential essay on laughter. Diabolical laughter, writes Kundera, has something "malicious about it," because it sees through the absurdity of things, and reveals the meaninglessness behind the mask. (This is essentially Bergson's purificatory theme.) This comedy is explicitly set against "the laughter of the angels," which is the forced, joyless laughter of power, exulting in how well-ordered everything down below is. It is hard to miss the political pressure of Kundera's division.

Ignorance hypothesizes the returns to Czechoslovakia of Irena, a widow living in Paris, and Josef, a widower living in Denmark. Irena's Swedish boyfriend, Gustaf, has started doing business in Prague since the fall of communism, and he coaxes his girlfriend back to her native city. But Gustaf's Prague is very different from Irena's Prague. His is the city of new money and new success, in which English is displacing Czech as the lingua franca. Kundera sees Gustaf without mercy—a ridiculous figure who noisily "explains" Prague to his Czech partner, and runs around his office wearing a ludicrous T-shirt bearing the slogan "Franz Kafka was born in Prague." He seems an easy target, as do Irena's old friends, who have not seen her for twenty years. Irena organizes a dinner, and brings good French wine. Her friends ignore the wine and drink Czech beer. Above all, they ignore Irena; they have no interest in her life in France. Only at the end of the dinner do they start to ask Irena about her younger life in Czechoslovakia. She feels that this is too little, too late: "Earlier, by their total uninterest in her experience abroad, they amputated twenty years from her life. Now, with this interrogation, they are trying to stitch her old past onto her present life. As if they were amputating her forearm and attaching the hand directly to the elbow."

One of Irena's friends says that she should return to Prague for good. But Irena feels that this Siren is "an emissary from the graveyards (the graveyards of the homeland), her job was to call Irena back into line: to warn her that time is short and that life is supposed to finish where it started." She feels that her homeland no longer belongs to her; in order to come back for good, she thinks to herself, she would have to take the twenty years of her life spent in France and set fire to it in a sacrificial ceremony. This is the price that she would have to pay to be "pardoned" by her old friends. When she tries to explain that emigration was not easy, her friend says that no one is interested anymore in suffering. "Those suffering-contests are over now. These days people brag about success, not about suffering."

Irena is a flat and rather dislikable creature, and the scenes in which she encounters old friends have a scratchy, rushed, irritated atmosphere. What Eliot called the shadow of an impure motive falls over these scenes, as if Kundera were not quite able to suppress his own anger at the way his country has received him: one senses the veronica of the author's grimace just behind these passages. Still, occasionally Kundera is able to fix a moment that has an authentic pathos. As soon as Irena arrives in Prague, she realizes that she has the wrong clothes, because it is warmer than she imagined it would be. She buys an unbecoming dress, which makes her look like "a provincial schoolteacher." Catching sight of herself in shop windows, she sees "the life she would have lived if

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she had stayed in Prague."

Josef, Kundera's other émigré, is a more sympathetic creation. We follow his return to his brother's house. As Irena does with her friends, Josef discovers that his brother is incapable of talking about Josef's twenty years in Denmark. Josef sees that his brother is wearing Josef's old watch, and that his favorite painting—left behind in the rush of emigration—is now on his brother's wall. Where Irena is angry, Josef is ruminative. "He had the sense he was coming back into the world as might a dead man emerging from his tomb after twenty years: touching the ground with a timid foot that's lost the habit of walking; barely recognizing the world he had lived in but continually stumbling over the leavings from his life." Standing at the window of his hotel room, Josef looks over the square of his provincial hometown and barely recognizes it: "During his absence, an invisible broom had swept across the landscape of his childhood, wiping away everything familiar; the encounter he had expected never took place."

Kundera powerfully evokes the émigré's dilemma: that of spending a life trapped in alien categories. The émigré is never French; but when he returns to Czechoslovakia, he is no longer fully Czech, either. His "freedom" is actually a kind of invisibility. Again, Irena's petulant bitterness seems to have a certain authorial pressure behind it:

> Oh, the French, you know—they have no need for experience. With them, judgments precede experience. When we got there they didn't need any information from us. They were already thoroughly informed that Stalinism is an evil and emigration is a tragedy. They weren't interested in what we thought, they were interested in us as living proof of what they thought. So they were generous to us and proud of it. When Communism collapsed all of a sudden, they looked hard at me, an investigator's look. And after that, something soured. I didn't behave the way they expected.... They had really done a lot for me. They saw me as the embodiment of an émigré's suffering. Then the time came for me to confirm that suffering by my joyous return to the homeland. And that confirmation didn't happened. They felt duped. And so did I, because up till then I'd thought they loved me not for my suffering but for my self.

Irena makes this speech to Josef near the end of the book. The two émigrés meet at the Paris airport, and in the erotic choreography typical of Kundera it is only a matter of time until they end up in bed together. *Ignorance* ends with two sexual pairings: Josef and Irena, and, more unusually, Gustaf and Irena's sexy mother. But it is a feeble closure. It feels formulaic, merely a way of combining all the available characters, like a group photograph for the novel's last page. Once again, one wonders at Kundera's faith in sex as a formal and comic means of revelation.

What is it in sex that Kundera finds so narratively satisfying? The answer is that sex, like comedy, cannot really be a natural ingredient of Kundera's fictional world, but is instead highly functional. It brandishes its utility. Sex is seen as the equivalent of the joke, the necessary opponent of sexless, jokeless, "angelic" communism, the highest and most explosive assertion of the individual's freedom against the state. Above all, sex has become for Kundera the ultimate weapon in the struggle of the private against the public. Although Kundera is popularly celebrated for the way in which his novels combine the private and the public, the individually internal and the externally political, his work in fact represents a prolonged attempt to separate these dimensions. In *The Joke*, Ludvik exults that he is making moves on a local girl, Lucie, in a cinema while the Soviet propaganda film *Court of Honor* plays on the screen: "I concentrated entirely on her; to what was happening on the screen, I paid no attention (what a ridiculous revenge: I enjoyed letting the film so often quoted at me by my moral guardians unreel before me unheeded)."

Again, Kundera is famous for his modernist or postmodernist forms, mixing essay and dramatic action, but his work is really the exploration and expansion into totalitarian times of the great insights of the nineteenth-century liberal novel, especially of Tolstoy: that in private life one finds a truer perspectival power than in the pompous horizons of public life. It is in the folds of families—for Kundera, this means relationships rather than families—that the real truths are found, not on the immaculate uniforms of public lives.

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Karel recalls his mother and her strange behavior during the invasion of 1968, when the Russians rolled into Prague. A week earlier, Karel's mother had invited the pharmacist to come and pick the pears in her garden, which were now ripe. But the pharmacist never came and Mama

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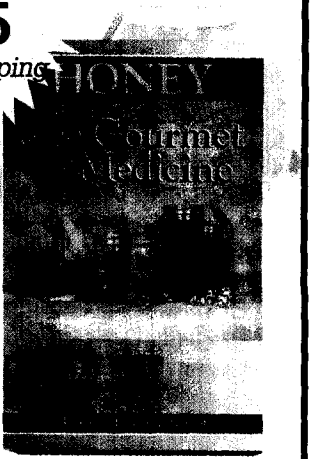

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was unable to forgive him. At first Karel is infuriated by his mother's skewed private vision: "everyone else is thinking about tanks, and you're thinking about pears." But over time Karel begins to sympathize with his mother's perspective, "which had a big pear tree in the foreground and somewhere in the distance a tank no bigger than a ladybug, ready at any moment to fly away out of sight. Ah yes! In reality it's Mama who is right: tanks are perishable, pears are eternal." It is not surprising, perhaps, that this chapter involves several athletic bouts of sex, including a threesome between Karel, his wife, and his wife's girlfriend, which is almost witnessed by Karel's mother, who has come to stay with her son and daughter-in-law. The orgiastic sex emblematizes, in a sense, the triumph of Mama's perspective: the ripe pears of sex against the unripe metal of the tanks.

Kundera does not mention Tolstoy, but this passage in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is reminiscent of the scene in *War and Peace* when Prince Andrew returns from battle to his estate to find two little girls trying to steal some plums: "A new sense of comfort and relief came over him when, seeing these girls, he realized the existence of other human interests entirely aloof from his own and just as legitimate as those which preoccupied him." Kundera later writes in his novel that "all of us are prisoners of a rigid conception of what is important and what is not, and so we fasten our anxious gaze on the important, while from a hiding place behind our backs the unimportant wages its guerrilla war, which will end in surreptitiously changing the world and pouncing on us by surprise."

For Prince Andrew, the discovery that the world is made of different perspectives occurs naturally, as a happy accident. For Kundera, writing under the shadow of communism, there cannot really be such an easy Tolstoyan egalitarianism, in which one just view of the world takes its place alongside another. Instead, the pears must banish the tanks, and sex must banish the propaganda film; there must be a triumphing of the private. Nor can Kundera happily recreate Prince Andrew's sense of surprise, whereby a fictional theme grows naturally from a serendipitous soil. In Kundera's use, his characters seem more like pieces on a thematic board, arranged and placed for the purposes of necessary argument.

For Kundera, then, sex represents the greatest intensification of the private. If we differ from each other by only one-millionth, he writes in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, it is in sex that "the one-millionth dissimilarity of the I resides." Only in sexuality does it become "precious, because not accessible in public." In his earlier books, sex did indeed sometimes have the political charge that Kundera wanted for it, though a difficulty was that since the West had made sex ubiquitous and uncharged during the 1960s and 1970s, it was always awkward for Kundera's books to re-pristinate sex. Sometimes, the erotic romps in his fictions (and their steady undertone of misogyny) seemed to mark them as merely anachronistic, the belated offerings of old Central Europe. (Josef Škvorecký's novels occasionally breathed the same musty male atmosphere.)

In *Ignorance*, however, the curious weightlessness of the sexual episodes obviously has to do with a catastrophic collapse of context paralleled by the collapse of communism. The two returning émigrés are no longer living in shackles. They have traveled from free countries to visit a newly free country; they are free to go and free to stay. Their erotic shenanigans seem, as a result, only to be the spoiled exercise of an exhausted liberty, both on their parts and on the author's. If, in Kundera's earlier books, one felt at least the notional presence of the secret police, poised at the door and ready to interrupt the first stirring of carnal desire, and hence the whispered justification of such merry goings-on, the sex-servants of *Ignorance* seem like mere greedy consumers, while the writer struggles to make this frictionless fucking somehow significant.

This indeed may be why, in a broader sense, *Ignorance* fails to amass. As far as one can tell—dates are cloudy in the book, no doubt deliberately—Irena and Josef are returning to Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, shortly after communism's fall. Their difficulties, their angers, and their frustrations are historically specific. But Kundera's spindly style and his starvation of detail render his characters thinly emblematic, so that it is hard to remember, as one reads, that the novel is indeed set in the early 1990s, that it is really a kind of historical novel. Instead it seems to live in the present age, and the Prague described—a city in which English has become the chief foreign language, and in which success is prized over suffering—seems also to belong to the present rather than to the early 1990s.

Though the historical Irena and Josef, returning to a still shaky country, would not be entirely free, and would not feel so, the fictional Irena and Josef, as they appear in this book, seem too free—completely liberated, made weightless by Kundera's hypothetical style, his manner of seeming merely to play with possible scenes and encounters. Shorn of their immediate historical context, Josef and Irena spin around in the polemical atmosphere of the book, a polemic that Kundera seems to be conducting through his characters, and which seems to belong to the present moment rather than to a decade ago. Since they have little personality, Irena and Josef seem more like symbolic whiners than Kundera surely wants them to be, their bitterness too like the adolescent plaint "No one understands me!" They seem relatively free people complaining too much about being relatively unfree. A strange lack of proportion is felt: Josef and Irena are returning only for brief stays, yet the novel seems to forget this, and treats their dilemmas as crises, as if they were indeed permanently relocating to Czechoslovakia, with all the gravity of a final move. But Josef and Irena are not like Odysseus on his climactic way back

Still Life with Cardoon and Carrots

Juan Sanchez Cotan, 1603, oil on canvas

These are not the instruments of Christ's Passion
spotlit in the frame of the niche: not nails
but carrots, not the flail of the Flagellation
but a cardoon. And this is not an altar, or an altarpiece
but a *cantarero*: a Toledan larder. Here
is the beginning of Spanish still-life.

Cardoon, from the Latin *cardus*: an artichoke,
whose thorny thistle-head was used for carding wool;
a winter vegetable with ridged stalks like celery,
but wide and white, curving like ribs from the root.
Sanchez Cotan would have eaten them, blanched,
in salads, or cooked them, with the carrots, in a stew.

Thirty years later, Zurbaran would complete the picture,
and provide the lamb: filling the same black larder
with his own bound and sorrowful *Agnus Dei*.

Robin Robertson

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to Ithaca, despite the novel's attempts to link them thus. They are closer to political tourists than to Odysseus.

In a curious way, the novel treats Irena and Josef exactly as they complain that their old friends treat them. Kundera has seemingly little interest in their lives in France and Denmark, about which he provides only the barest facts. About their earlier years in Czechoslovakia, we learn next to nothing. They are, as Irena fears, amputated beings—but it is Kundera who has amputated them. They are keen to escape a life of alien categorization, yet they cannot stop hoarding one category clearly still dear to them: that of the émigré. One feels about them that they want not to be émigrés in any particular place, since that would entail inevitable miscategorization, but émigrés in a notional land of other émigrés. They want not to be émigrés, but they want less to be returned émigrés. They want not to be Czechs-in-Denmark or Czechs-in-France, but they want less to be Czechs in Czechoslovakia. In this way the novel enforces the very complaints that it makes, and the result is an arrested book that seems not to desire to change a situation so much as to freeze it, the better to attack it. For all his anger, on the evidence of this strange book Milan Kundera would like things to stay much the same. ■

Back Pages

By Zoë Heller

The Child That Books Built: A Life in Reading by Francis Spufford

(Metropolitan Books, 224 pp., $23)

Francis Spufford's memoir of a reading childhood opens with a fine description of his seven-year-old self submerging into text.

> My ears closed.... Deep in the mysterious ductwork an adjustment had taken place with the least possible actual movement, an adjustment chiefly of pressure. There was an airlock in there. It sealed to the outside so that it could open to the inside. The silence that fell on the noises of people and traffic and dogs allowed an inner door to open to the book's data, its script of sound. There was a brief stage of transition in between, when I'd hear the text's soundtrack poking through the fabric of the house's real murmur, like the moment of passage on the edge of sleep where your legs jerk as your mind switches over from instructing solid limbs to governing the phantom body that runs and dances in dreams. Then, flat on my front with my chin in my hands or curled in a chair like a prawn, I'd be gone.

Memories of our childhood reading experiences tend to have a prelapsarian glow. In the earliest communions with books, there is an almost mystical intensity that some of us spend the rest of our reading lives trying to recapture. Perhaps this is why so many parents are anxious to have their offspring read the same books that they did as children: they wish to pass on the pleasures of *The Wind in the Willows* or *The House at Pooh Corner*, but, even more urgently, they want to retrieve something of the dense atmosphere of their childhoods for themselves.

The Child That Books Built goes a long way toward gratifying this impulse. With its precisely rendered invocations of what it is like to discover Tolkien's Middle-Earth or C. S. Lewis's Narnia or Laura Ingalls Wilder's prairie for the first time, this book grants much the same sort of sentimental satisfactions as might be gained from a dark winter's afternoon spent rummaging through an attic. It also offers an intelligent, thoughtful inquiry into how the pleasure of reading actually works.

The standard metaphor for fictional pleasure is one of imaginative transport. Books are doorways to other worlds; they take us away. Yet as Spufford correctly points out, the very first books we read are not required to take us far. Dragons and dryads will come later, but in the beginning cats, laundry, and bath-times are quite heady enough fare. Spufford recalls being "viscerally affected" by the illustrations of ordinary playthings in Shirley Hughes's *Lucy and Tom's Day*—"the little red and blue train which seemed to be the essence of toy." I, too, can remember being slain, at age four, by a Dick Bruna drawing of a basket of eggs. (Even now, if I concentrate hard enough, I can summon up their devastating charisma.) Perhaps, as Spufford suggests, these stylized representations of everyday phenomena feed some early appetite for the essence or the *Ur* of things: the toyness of toys, the eggness of eggs. At any rate, even at the picture-book stage, it is possible to detect the first stirrings of desire for what Spufford calls "a fictive life that is stronger in its colours and clearer in its lines than your own unnarrated existence."

With the advent of fairy tales, the child begins traveling into worlds that have no equivalent in his or her real life. But these stories, too, effect a satisfying distillation of reality, not least by reducing the vast and troubling mysteries of personality to a neat taxonomy of good princesses, bad stepmothers, and kings who set tasks for suitors. As Spufford notes, "This vocabulary of types is actually easier to acquire in some ways than knowledge about the child's own world, because the fairy-tale world is so perfectly self-explanatory."

The modern approach to fairy tales is split between two more or less contradictory schools of thought. One, pioneered by Bruno Bettelheim, proposes the fairy tale as a kind of therapeutic workout for a child's unconscious, with the dramatis personae acting as proxies for various warring drives. The other sees the fairy tale as historically determined material that can—and should—be altered to suit changing cultural values. Hence the practice, popular in the 1970s and 1980s, of revising tales to reflect egalitarian and feminist principles, making over every doe-eyed princess as a spunky chick with her eye on graduate school.

I confess that I was rather looking forward to watching Spufford put the boot into the reform brigade, but in his characteristically genial and fair-minded way he insists on giving them their due. Some of their revisions are clumsy and reductive, he admits, but they are right, after all, to be concerned about the inherently prescriptive nature of fairy tales.

> Every description in a fairy story of how people behave toward each other, with justice or injustice, is faintly, complicatedly, an endorsement. The certainty of a story that allows a child to add it—with

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Zoë Heller's new novel, *Notes on a Scandal*, will be published next summer by Henry Holt.

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delight—to the category of "things that are so" also lends to its content the slight implication that this is how things ought to be. We cannot be told that "Once there was a prince" without also being told (on some level and in some part) that it was right that there was a prince. What knits together out of nothing and yet is solid enough to declare that it is so, recommends itself to us although we don't receive the recommendation straightforwardly. In this lies the power, and the danger, of stories.

As an apologia for the would-be Bowdlers, this passage strikes me as faintly shocking. It reminds me of the English literature teachers I encountered at school who thought that the vital thing to do with a Shakespeare play was to draw out its implicit sexisms and racisms. Yes, art is powerful and persuasive. And yes, when we are drawn into a story, it commands our sympathy, however temporarily, for its imaginative vision of the way the world operates. But even the doctrinaire scheme of a fairy tale presents quite a bit of room for the reader's independent maneuver—a range of forces and characters to consider and, if you want, to "identify with."

Thus my three-year-old daughter likes to play at being Cinderella to my prince. ("We're falling in love!" she yodels as we waltz around the kitchen.) But she also likes to play the wicked stepmother and lock me in the bathroom, shouting "Clean the floors!" with a witchy cackle. I suppose that if Cinderella were the only story she was ever going to read, I might be concerned about its insidious message of anti-republicanism. But her days are filled with stories, each of them offering a different kind of prescription or demanding a different kind of imaginative leap. It is the multiplicity of fictional worlds that guards her from treating any one fiction as a tract. The true antidote for the propaganda power of story is ... more stories. And, of course, lived experience: no child is built entirely out of books, after all.

Yet the idea of reading as a potentially perilous exercise is strangely important to Spufford. It arises again, more forcefully, when he writes directly about his own childhood. Spufford says that, as a young boy, he used books to limit his confrontation with the agonizing vulnerability of his younger sister, who was born with a rare and disastrous disease called cystinosis. He gobbled up books frantically, not so much for their content as for their soothing form—the deployments of story itself.

> When I read stories obsessively as a child I was striking a kind of deal that allowed me to turn away. Sometime in childhood I made a bargain that limited, so I thought, the power over me that real experience had, the real experience that comes to us in act and incident and through the proximate, continuous existence of those we love. All right, I said, I'll let a quantity of that stream over me, if I can have a balancing portion of this, the other kind of experience which is controlled and repeatable, and comes off the page.

Fiction became for him, in other words, a narcotic substance. The very same properties that gave it its potential for revelation—its vividness, its concrete detail, its magical substitution of words for things—were those that allowed it to be consumed as a drug. Even as an adult, Spufford suggests, his book habit—he still reads more or less a book a day—has a slightly pathetic, compulsive aspect. His "sludgey dives into text" are self-induced sessions of oblivion, willed escapes from the complexities of real life.

Generally speaking, the reader is a symbol of virtue in our culture, just as the Nintendo player is a symbol of unwholesomeness. This is why accounts of childhood passion for books tend, even when their tone is ostensibly rueful—what an odd/pale/serious/nerdy child I was!—to have a slightly smug undertone: they are testaments to the author's early and intuitive preference for high culture over mass culture. There is something tonic in Spufford's challenge to this automatic association of reading with high-mindedness. For consuming books is not necessarily a rigorous exercise, of course, and those of us who frantically scan the backs of detergent bottles when there is no other prose at hand know only too well that the intellectual dignity conferred on bookishness is not always earned.

And yet I'm not sure that Spufford ever really succeeds in persuading us that childhood reading is dangerous as such. If I read him correctly, he wants to say that fiction—or at least certain ways of consuming fiction—can act as a hindrance to emotional maturity, by keeping a person from having to engage with the difficult, disappointing, unpredictable stuff of real life. It's not so much that this is not true as that it is true of almost everything. The same can be said about certain ways of having sex, or drinking alcohol, or eating food, or taking exercise. There is very little human pleasure, when it comes down to it, that is not capable of morphing into vice or dysfunction. And as dangerous substances go, Tolkien still seems a better bet for children than video games, or crack.

A good many keen childhood readers make their transition into adult reading by way of the classics. But Spufford claims to have found the intricate investigations of human emotion in Austen and Eliot and Hardy "dry." He opted instead for James Bond and science fiction. In his late teens, he discovered Borges and Calvino. And finally, on the very precipice of adulthood, he found porn: Grove Press paperbacks with titles such as *Davina and Beatrice*, purporting to be suppressed Victorian classics. Like so much of the fiction that had sustained him throughout his childhood, the attraction of porn seems to have lain in its ability to conjure up life—in this case, women—in predictable, controllable portions.

> I knew that there was a blatant contradiction between this brutish thingifying of women and my nervous attention to them as individuals in real life. But I didn't care. I wanted to be nasty. I wanted to transgress again, to go across this new line fiction offered me. Now, as well as loving books and learning from them, I could consummate the relationship by having sex with them.

This constitutes Spufford's bravest attempt to demonstrate how unvirtuous reading can be; but even here, one has to say, he fails to generate much alarm. Indeed, he takes a far dimmer view of his adolescent book list than any of his readers are likely to take. So he wasn't a Janeite: on balance, this is probably a forgivable sin in a teenage boy. (He appears to have acquainted himself subsequently with her oeuvre.) So he whacked off to books that "thingified" women. What to say to this other than that he was not alone? As with all the other confessions in this book, the supposed wrong being confessed is overshadowed by the scrupulousness and the eloquence with which it is confessed. If, as a young man, Spufford was not always as in touch with his emotions as he might have been, he certainly seems to have overcome that defect now. He writes about himself with cogency and insight and charm. And hasn't a lifetime of reading surely contributed more to this achievement than it has hindered it?

It seems unnecessary for Spufford to have framed his enormously interesting memoir as a masculine mea culpa. There are moments in this book that have the slightly nutty, self-flagellating quality of old-style Communist Party "self-criticism" sessions. He needs to relax. The child that books built seems, on the evidence presented here, to have turned into a thoroughly decent man. ■

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The Oligarch

By RICHARD A. POSNER

James Burnham and the Struggle for the World: A Life by Daniel Kelly

(Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 442 pp., $29.95)

HAD I BEEN asked years ago who James Burnham was, I would have replied that he was an economist, or perhaps a management consultant or a business historian, who had been prominent in the 1930s and had written a book called *The Managerial Revolution* which, like Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means's better-known book *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, argued that capitalism was moving into a new phase in which corporations would be controlled by hired management rather than by the nominal owners, the shareholders. Later I discovered George Orwell's remarkable essays on Burnham and learned that *The Managerial Revolution* had been published not in the 1930s but in 1941, at the height of Germany's success during World War II, and that it had predicted a German victory in the war, followed by the division of the world into three superstates that would struggle inconclusively for world domination. Germany would win the war, Burnham argued, because it had mastered the managerial approach to economic organization. Later still I discovered that Orwell had parodied *The Managerial Revolution* in *1984*: shortly before their arrest, Winston reads aloud to Julia from *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchic Collectivism*, a treatise ostensibly written by the Trotsky figure in the novel but actually forged by the Inner Party, which describes the world of 1984 as divided into three totalitarian superstates.

Evidently Burnham was more than the fellow traveler of Berle and Means (or the precursor of John Kenneth Galbraith) that I had imagined him to be. But I still knew nothing about him beyond what Orwell had written in the 1940s until Daniel Kelly's biography came along. He turns out to have been quite a different figure from what I had imagined, and even more interesting. His life was exemplary of the species we now call the "public intellectual," and of the intermittently influential ideology that we may call political romanticism.

Burnham was born in a suburb of Chicago in 1905 and so was still a young man when he wrote *The Managerial Revolution*, his first major book rather than (as I would have guessed) the culmination of his career. The son of a successful railroad executive, Burnham went to Princeton, studied literature and philosophy, and graduated first in his class; he then studied the same subjects at Oxford for two years. Joining the faculty of New York University in 1929, he taught literature and philosophy to undergraduates and graduate students there until resigning in 1951. His academic specialty was aesthetics. His progression up the academic ladder was slow—he did not become an associate professor until 1946—because he would not write academic books or articles. His principal ally on the faculty was Sidney Hook.

Burnham had private money and was Princetonian-Oxonian in manner and dress, happily married with children, very "normal" and *haut bourgeois*. (To put it differently, he was as unlike Sidney Hook in his personal style as can be imagined.) The Depression seems to have had no impact on his style of living. Yet in 1933 he became a fervent Trotskyist. It was suddenly clear to Burnham that capitalism was doomed and that communism was the solution to the economic problems on which capitalism had foundered. But he hated Stalin, and that left Trotsky, who was in exile in Mexico and had a tiny American following. The two men corresponded extensively, and Trotsky appears to have regarded Burnham as his outstanding American disciple. Kelly provides a riveting description of the fractionated far-left politics in the 1930s, with Burnham a leading figure in one of the tiniest fractions, distrusted by his colleagues owing to his social sophistication.

Burnham dropped Trotskyism, on the eve of writing *The Managerial Revolution*, as abruptly as he had taken it up seven years earlier. Forced collectivization, the purge trials, and the Nazi-Soviet pact convinced him, as it had failed to convince Trotsky, that communism was not a happy solution to the problems of capitalism after all. But of the failure of capitalism he remained convinced. The principal theme of *The Managerial Revolution* is that capitalism has no future. It cannot marshal economic and military resources efficiently, as is shown by the massive unemployment in all the capitalist nations—even in England at war in 1940. In the conditions of modernity, resources have to be managed from the center; they cannot be left to the random and unjust allocation by markets. The Soviet Union was the first nation to grasp this fact fully, and it has remained, Burnham writes, structurally the foremost example of managerialism.

But in performance, Burnham continues, the Soviet Union has been overtaken by Hitler's Germany, in which, behind a façade of capitalism, managerialism reigns. Indeed, it was managerialism that was responsible for Hitler's lightning victory over capitalist France in 1940 and his forthcoming victory over England, the last of the fully capitalist states. For Japan and Italy are managerialist—and New Dealism, as Burnham calls it, is merely the American version of managerialism. Roosevelt is moving rapidly to concentrate all power in executive agencies controlled by managers; the 1940 election may be the last one held in the United States. The ideology of capitalism is jejune; it can no longer inspire, and it is giving way to managerial ideology: "In place of 'freedom' and 'free initiative,' planning. Less talk about 'rights' and 'natural rights'; more about 'duties' and 'order' and 'discipline.' Less about 'opportunity' and more about 'jobs.'"

Berle and Means were wrong to think that capitalism could survive into the era of managerialism, albeit with capitalists reduced to rentiers. The means of production, Burnham insists, will be owned by the state, which is to say, by the managers, who will govern in their own interest, just as the plutocrats did in their day. (Hence the justice of Orwell's parodic version of *The Managerial Revolution* as "oligarchic collectivism.") Efficiency in the management of resources will produce enormous economies of scale, enabling the strongest nations in each of the world's regions to expand until the world is dominated by

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three superstates, one centered in Europe (probably Germany), one in Asia (probably Japan), and one in North and South America (the United States).

Other books written in the 1930s and 1940s also predicted that capitalism (unplanned, uncoordinated, and therefore chaotic) would inevitably give way to some form of socialism (planned and administered by experts), because the deliberate application of intelligence to the management of a nation's resources had to be more efficient than the decentralized decision-making of the market. We now know that this belief—call it the technocratic fallacy—is unsound. But of the many articulations of it, Burnham's version is one of the most vivid and arresting. Orwell remarked upon Burnham's penchant for "apocalyptic visions. Nations, governments, classes and social systems are constantly described as expanding, contracting, decaying, dissolving, toppling, crashing, crumbling, crystallising, and, in general, behaving in an unstable and melodramatic way." An analytic vice was a literary virtue.

THE MANAGERIAL REVOLUTION has a rhetorical flair that invites comparison to *Brave New World* and to *1984* itself, fictional treatments of the technocratic vision that, like Burnham's book, predicted that the problems of capitalism would be solved but that the solution would be horrible. The boldness of Burnham's prophesying is noteworthy. The end of capitalism, the end of a Europe of independent states, the victory of Germany over capitalist England, the emergence of the three superstates: these predictions are announced with a certitude that is well-nigh absolute. Their eventual falsification now confers upon *The Managerial Revolution* something of the feel—and even the charm—of fiction.

But as World War II proceeded and then gave way to the beginnings of the Cold War, Burnham turned the corner once again. He became a fanatical anti-Communist. At first he was leagued with prominent liberal anti-Communists such as his friend Hook, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Reinhold Niebuhr, and Raymond Aron. Burnham's book *The Struggle for the World* (1947), despite its lurid title, made a compelling case that the United States must prepare for a life-and-death struggle with the Soviet Union. The book, critically but admiringly reviewed by Orwell, who commended Burnham for his "intellectual courage," is unlike *The Managerial Revolution* in substance as well as style—for Burnham had dropped managerialism.

Despite his break with Trotsky and his fierce anti-communism, which included a brief stint with the CIA organizing intellectuals against communism, Burnham still considered himself a man of the left. But he was traveling rightward rapidly. His embrace (only slightly qualified) of McCarthyism, his accusing Schlesinger of being soft on communism, his allegation that American physicists had a peculiar affinity with communism, his rejection of the policy of containment in favor of liberation of the Communist world by the combination of propaganda and subversion that he called "polwar": all this earned Burnham ostracism by liberal circles. He was dropped from the editorial board of *Partisan Review*. Even the CIA dropped him, thinking him something of a fascist. Eventually Burnham would feel so estranged from his erstwhile liberal friends as to describe American liberalism as "the ideology of national suicide."

McCarthyism had drawn him close to William F. Buckley. When, in 1954, Buckley decided to start *National Review*, he asked Burnham to help him. When the magazine began publication, Burnham signed on as a senior editor. He was soon second in command, running the magazine during Buckley's frequent absences. Kelly's description of the infighting between Burnham and the other editors is revealing. Though liberals thought, not unreasonably, that Burnham was a right-wing nut, some of his fellow editors at *National Review* considered him too pragmatic; they also resented him for his wealth and his sophistication. His career with *National Review* reprised the infighting of his Trotskyist days, then the fractious politics of the far left, now the fractious politics of the far right; the phenomenon was essentially the same. One of the revelations of Kelly's book is the skill, tact, and maturity with which Buckley, who stood fast in support of Burnham, managed the tensions within the editorial staff. Anyone who thinks that Buckley's rather frivolous public persona is the entire measure of the man will be disabused by Kelly's account.

Until he was disabled by a massive stroke in 1978, Burnham made *National Review* his career, writing a column as well as helping Buckley to shape the magazine's editorial stance. He concentrated on questions of foreign policy and defense policy, pressing his anti-Communist line unflinchingly; but he also became increasingly concerned, in a dim echo of *The Managerial Revolution*, about the extent of federal power. For this reason, he opposed *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and supported the opposition of the South to federal efforts, modest as they were in the 1950s, to secure the civil rights of blacks. He was not a bigot, but he had become deeply conservative, even reactionary. Yet there was the occasional characteristic deviation: he applauded the Dionysian excess of Woodstock, for example, and supported the transfer of the Panama Canal to Panama by President Carter.

Burnham actually admired Carter, as he had Nelson Rockefeller, whom he had favored for president over both Nixon and Goldwater. It was his unorthodox streak, coupled with his atheism (a thoroughly lapsed Catholic, he did not return to the Church until he was on his deathbed) and his pragmatism—not to mention his Trotskyist past—that alarmed many of his colleagues at *National Review*, though Buckley took it all in stride. In 1983, Burnham was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Reagan, whom Burnham had long admired, not least for his optimism about America. Burnham had traveled very far from the pessimistic vision of *The Managerial Revolution*. He died in 1987, quite forgotten except on the far right. By now he is probably forgotten even in those precincts.

I DOUBT THAT Kelly's book will stimulate a great deal of renewed interest in him. This is not intended as a criticism of Kelly's work. It is a fine biography—thorough but not overlong, lucid, carefully researched and documented, a work of scholarship that is also wonderful to read. I have a few criticisms, none fundamental. There are no photographs in the book. Given the repeated references to the Burnhams' social cachet, one would have liked to see pictures of them at the various stages of their lives, as well as pictures of the obscure figures on the far left and the far right with whom Burnham consorted. There is also the mystery of the Burnhams' money. His father, though a successful executive, came from humble origins and died in his forties, so he can hardly have accumulated a fortune. One of Burnham's ill-wishers is quoted as saying that Burnham's wife was an heiress to the Pillsbury fortune, but there is no hint of that in Kelly's account. The Burnhams certainly lived pretty high on the hog, and no thanks to Burnham's meager salary from NYU. Kelly also leaves things dangling by not telling us what happened to Burnham's three children, though he mentions in passing and without elaboration that one of them committed suicide in middle age. Readers of biography like to have the family tree completed. And Kelly gives too little space to *The Managerial Revolution* (thirteen pages in a book of more than four hundred pages), which is Burnham's only claim to a posthumous reputation. But the

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main problem is that this not uncritical biography is not critical enough.

Orwell said of *The Managerial Revolution* that it exhibited power worship. Burnham, who admired Orwell, resented the criticism. He had said repeatedly in the book—it was indeed a leitmotif of his career—that he was a realist, like Machiavelli, his foremost intellectual hero. He did not admire Hitler, or the Nazis; in denying that terrorism spelled decadence, or in predicting a German victory, he was just telling it like it was. But Orwell was right. The relish with which Burnham described the overthrow of a decadent capitalism by a dynamic, youthful managerialism (he emphasized the youth of the Nazi leadership compared to that of England and France) that had "broken through the restrictions of capitalist finance" and "makes war better than the undoubtedly capitalist nations" and displays "spectacular energy"—and "the ability to make war well is never a sign of decadence but of its opposite" and "the young, new, rising social order is, as against the old, more likely to resort on a large scale to lies, terror, and persecution"—is unmistakable. "A rising social class and a new order of society have got to break through the old moral codes ...," Burnham declared. "If they win, they take care in due time of manners and morals." As Orwell accurately summarized Burnham's political theory, "Society is of its nature oligarchical, and the power of the oligarchy always rests upon force and fraud.... All historical changes finally boil down to the replacement of one ruling class by another."

What Orwell recognized is that realism of the sort embraced by Burnham, though it fancies itself the opposite of romanticism, is actually a form of romanticism. (Kelly notes this in passing, but he does not develop the point.) It is a standpoint that appeals to many intellectuals, and it explains the appeal that communism held for so many of them. Political romanticism appeals to them on two grounds. The first is aesthetic. The exercise of concentrated political power is dramatic, exciting, tense. It lends itself to action-packed narratives, reversals of fortune, dramatic confrontations—think of the career of Caesar or Napoleon or Hitler. The second basis of the appeal of political romanticism to intellectuals is psychological. It is natural for them to fancy themselves the people who see clearly through the muddle that is social life as it is actually lived. They see that things could be better, they are frustrated by their powerlessness to make things better, and this attracts them (not all of them, of course—I am speaking of a common deformation of intellectuality, but not a universal one) to political solutions that involve the imposition of order from the top down. Hence managerialism—and in Burnham's version, managerialism forced upon the entire world at the point of the sword. Burnham's managerialism is an intellectual seduction carried to its logical extreme, beautifully narrated, and yielding a monstrous progeny.

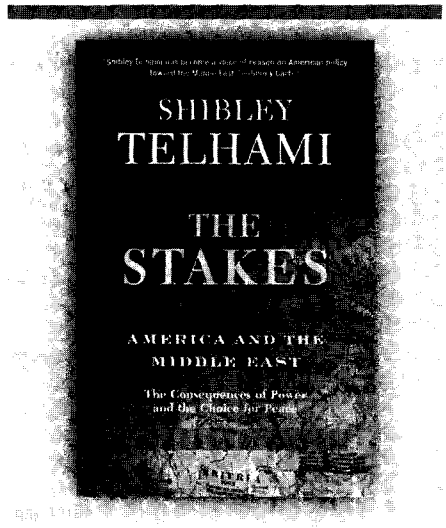
THIS WAS THE book's wicked attraction, and its fascination for Orwell. And this is something that Kelly's biography misses. It misses, too, Burnham's significance for an understanding of the phenomenon of what we call the public intellectual. Burnham was a classic public intellectual, an academic with academic brains and academic knowledge, but uninterested in writing academic tomes for a handful of other academics to read. He was trained in literature and philosophy, but he wrote exclusively about politics. He was the author of a best-seller, eventually of a number of books aimed at a general audience, and ultimately a pundit. Yet he was forgotten long before he died, because the issues he dealt with were topical and the topics changed. He was not a closet intellectual, but a political activist and, appropriately enough, a manager (at *National Review*). A man of extremes, writing to shock.

He was shameless in prophecy and undaunted by repeated falsification. In a recent study of public intellectuals, I listed the failed prophecies of a number of prominent contemporary public intellectuals, but I was wrong to think that such an exposé might discourage irresponsible prophesying. I now think the significance of such prophesying lies not in its truth value but in its rhetorical effect. It does not really matter in the end whether the apocalyptic prophecies of *The Managerial Revolution* turned out to be true or false; they form a breathtaking, if horrific, vision of the future, and they give the book an amplitude, a resonance, and a sense of urgency that it would otherwise have lacked.

Moreover, these failed prophecies coexist with much genuine understanding. Burnham insisted in *The Managerial Revolution* that Europe would never be the same again, that the pre-war world had been irrevocably smashed no matter who won the war, that the British Empire was finished. He was right, anticipating by decades the thesis of the historian John Lukacs that the initial stage of World War II, which ended with the defeat of France, was the last European war—that, beginning with the German invasion of Russia (not yet launched when Burnham wrote his book), intra-European power struggles would become trivial. Europe had ceased to be the center of the world. The struggle would now turn global.

Burnham rightly sensed deep affinities between Germany and the Soviet Union, and so he grasped the naturalness of the Nazi-Soviet pact that precipitated Germany's invasion of Poland and with it the world war. (Hitler might have divided the world with Stalin had he not invaded the Soviet Union instead.) And Burnham was early in perceiving that there were genuine elements of social revolution in Nazism. His biggest mistake, but one in which he had plenty of company, was to exaggerate the advantages of the centralized direction of the allocation of a nation's resources.

Burnham lived in exceedingly dramatic times. His career and his thought are fascinating as well as exemplary. His interest in aesthetics was not an irrelevance after all. For he embraced an ideology rooted in an aesthetic approach to politics. And on the road from Leon Trotsky to William Buckley, he detoured to write a classic of political romanticism. There are not many figures like him among us today, and so we would do well, as we enter another tense period of our history, to take the lessons of his life seriously and to reflect upon the temptations of political romanticism and the siren song of managerialism. ■



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ONE OF THE THINGS THAT has fascinated me about *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page is its occasional capacity to rise above the routine moral callousness of hack conservative punditry and attain a level of exquisite depravity normally reserved for villains in James Bond movies. To wit, a recent lead editorial titled "THE NON-TAXPAYING CLASS." A reader unfamiliar with the *Journal*'s editorial positions might read this headline and assume it refers to ultra-wealthy tax dodgers. But no—the *Journal*, of course, approves of such behavior. The non-taxpayers it denounces are those who earn too little to pay income taxes: "[A]lmost 13 percent of all workers," the editorial fumes, "have no tax liability. ... Who are these lucky duckies?" In typical *Journal* fashion, the editorial is premised upon a giant factual inaccuracy—it completely ignores sales and excise taxes, which consume a huge share of the working poor's income. But what makes the editorial truly exceptional is the reasoning underlying it. The *Journal* complains that low taxes on the poor are "undermining the political consensus for cutting taxes at all." For instance, the editorial considers the example of a worker who earns $12,000 per year, and, after noting bitterly that he pays less than 4 percent in income taxes, concludes, "It ain't peanuts, but not enough to get his or her blood boiling with tax rage." In other words, the *Journal* wants to raise taxes on the working poor so that they will have more "tax rage" and thus vote for Republicans. Once in office, of course, those Republicans would proceed to cut taxes for the well-off. (Indeed, according to the *Journal*'s logic, they *couldn't* cut taxes on the poor because that would just lead them to stop voting Republican.) When I try to visualize the editorial meeting that produced this bit of diabolical inspiration, I imagine one of the more rational staffers—maybe Dorothy Rabinowitz—tentatively raising her hand and asking, "Isn't that idea a bit, you know, immoral?" Then Robert Bartley or Paul Gigot would emit a deep, sinister laugh and press a hidden button, depositing the unfortunate staffer into a tank of piranhas. Come to think of it, I haven't seen Rabinowitz's byline in a couple of weeks.

THE *JOURNAL* IS PERHAPS MOST FAMOUS for helping to transform supply-side economics from a crank doctrine ridiculed by mainstream economists and rejected by Washington policymakers into a crank doctrine ridiculed by mainstream economists yet embraced by Washington policymakers. But, even though President Bush is no less committed to supply-side economics than was Ronald Reagan, W.'s policies, unlike the Gipper's, are almost never described in the press as "supply-side." A rare exception occurred last month, when President Bush declared at a press conference that "the deficit would have been bigger without the tax-relief package." A minor stir ensued, with Democrats accusing the administration of practicing supply-side economics and Bush aides denying it.

WHY BUSH'S EMBRACE OF VOODOO economics became newsworthy just recently is hard to figure, because his spokespeople have been saying the same thing for months. "The tax cut gives us a chance for sustained economic growth. If we have higher taxes on this economy then the [revenue] projections won't get stronger; they're more likely to get weaker," insisted White House Budget Director Mitch Daniels last summer. "The president does believe that cutting taxes is the best way to spur growth and therefore to have a return of bigger surpluses," declared Ari Fleischer ten months ago. Indeed, describing this administration's economic policies merely as "supply-side" is something of an understatement. Supply-siders believe that cutting upper-bracket tax rates can cause massive economic benefits, and in the early '80s they did famously claim that those benefits would be so large that they would actually cause tax revenues to increase. But most have spent the intervening years fervently insisting never to have said any such thing. "[T]he 'supply-side' movement is not remembered for its correct predictions about prosperity, but for the 'Laffer curve,' and its supposed prediction that the revenue effects of tax cuts would be large enough to shrink the deficit," writes Bartley in *The Seven Fat Years*, his apologia for Reaganomics. "The prediction, however, is not one any of us really ever made." So Bush has embraced a version of supply-side economics so radical that *even the supply-siders themselves have repudiated it*. After the president's controversial pronouncement, no less a purist than Jude Wanniski, author of the influential 1978 supply-side tract *The Way the World Works*, told *The Washington Post* that the Bush tax cut is "decreasing revenues."

WANNISKI, ONCE A CONFIDANT OF GOP stars such as Jack Kemp and Steve Forbes, has since become marginalized by holding forth on noneconomic subjects—for instance, defending Louis Farrakhan or insisting that Saddam Hussein did not use poison gas against the Kurds—where his nuttiness is apparent even to laymen. The other great tax-cut tome is *Wealth and Poverty*, written by George Gilder in 1981. Gilder's reputation, too, has gone south recently. After winning acclaim as a tax-cut zealot, Gilder abruptly became a telecommunications autodidact. During the 1990s boom he made a fortune as a new economy evangelist—he earned up to six figures for a single speech, and his newsletter, "Gilder Technology Report," often caused stocks he recommended to jump as much as 50 percent. Gilder used his wealth to purchase the conservative monthly *The American Spectator*, which he turned into a monument to his own genius. One issue featured a 6,600-word cover interview of Gilder himself, in which he was asked questions such as, "In the late 1970s and early '80s, you led the intellectual debate on sexual issues from the conservative side. In the 1980s your book *Wealth and Poverty* transformed the way people thought about capitalism. And then you wandered off to study transistors. Why did you do that?" (Gilder's reply: "I thought I had won those debates. Whenever I actively debated anybody, they didn't have any interesting arguments anymore.") In the same interview Gilder declared, "Almost all [upper-class women] are averse to science and technology and baffled by it. And they clutch at the pretentious irrationality of environmentalism as their countervailing wisdom." The *Spectator* promised its readers that "[a]n equally wide-ranging talk with George will be an annual event." Alas, only one ever took place. The technology crash caused most of the companies Gilder extolled in his newsletter to lose virtually all their value. "I told people in early 2000 they should sell half their shares in these companies," he told *Wired* in a semi-contrite interview last July. "I didn't say it often. I didn't put it in a newsletter." Gilder had to abandon the *Spectator* and, according to *Wired*, is now broke and has a lien against his home—giving the phrase "Wealth and Poverty" an unanticipated poignancy. But, as the *Journal* might note, his income-tax bill these days is probably almost nil. Lucky ducky.

JONATHAN CHAIT

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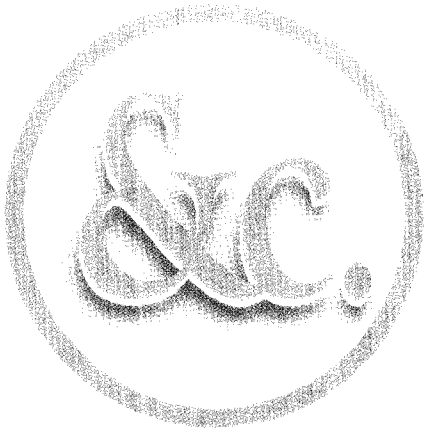

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Understanding the Brazilian Elections

Stephen Haber, Herbert S. Klein, and Richard Sousa are fellows at the Hoover Institution.

When Brazilian voters went to the polls in October, they did something that no Latin American electorate has done in three decades: they voted in a socialist president, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. Lula has been a major political figure of the left since the 1970s, when he led a series of strikes that helped undermine the military government. Three times he ran unsuccessfully for president as the Workers Party (Partido Trabalhisata—PT) candidate before this year's landslide victory, in which he carried all but one of Brazil's twenty-seven states, over centrist Jose Serra.

The overwhelming success of Lula and the Workers Party is a consequence of decades of stalled growth and failed promises. During the past eight years, the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso has pushed forward the privatization of government-owned firms, the relaxation of restrictions on trade, and the encouragement of foreign direct investment. Indeed, real GDP per capita in Brazil is, at present, only slightly above its 1982 level. Brazil is also among the most rigidly stratified societies on the planet. For an entire generation, Brazilians have not seen an improvement in either their absolute or their relative standards of living.

Lula's electoral success therefore needs to be understood as a backlash against the inability of the "Washington Consensus" to ignite sustained economic growth and restore the degree of social mobility that existed in Brazil during the boom period of the 1960s and 1970s.

Lula's victory, however, should not be interpreted as a dramatic movement to the left by Brazilian voters. The PT managed to win only three governorships and controls neither house of congress, which means that the PT must look for coalition partners in order to govern. As it does, Lula's legislative agenda will inevitably be watered down.

The PT has accepted the stability plans of the Cardoso government and most aspects of the country's open economy model. Although suggesting some tighter regulations on market activities, the PT agreed to accept all international agreements and honor all foreign and domestic loans. It also promised to maintain an open market and not deprivatize companies that had been sold to the public.

Although constrained in what he can accomplish, Lula will push for an aggressive tax reform in an attempt to capture a larger share of the upper class's income. He will also seek to redistribute income by increasing the minimum wage and (perhaps) by lowering the tax rates of low-salary workers. He will also push to increase expenditures for welfare and education. Whether he can obtain those goals, however, is far from certain.

Consensus will appear in foreign policy. Brazil's reluctance to support U.S. foreign policies, particularly those that call for the use of military force, has long and deep roots that go back to the U.S. government's support for Brazil's military dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s. No matter who had won this year's presidential election, Brazil would chart a course independent of U.S. foreign policies.

— Stephen Haber, Herbert S. Klein, and Richard Sousa

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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